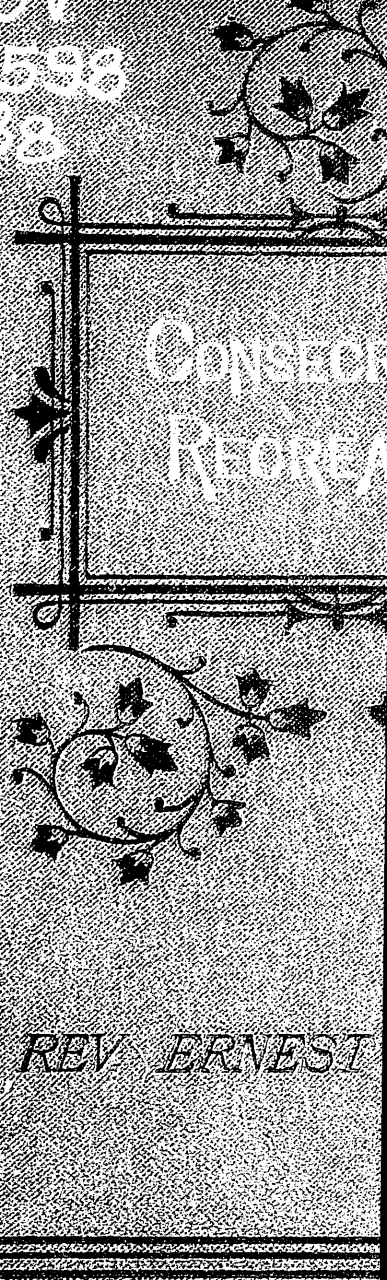

REV. ERNEST



T BOYS M.A.

The University of Chicago
Libraries



Exchange Duplicate

CONSECRATED RECREATION.

Works by the Rev. Ernest Boys,

AUTHOR OF 'CONSECRATED RECREATION,' ETC.

THE SURE FOUNDATION.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE.

'REST UNTO YOUR SOULS.'

'FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT.'

MY LORD'S MONEY.

THE BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCER.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

LIVING WATERS.

CHURCHMAN'S PENNY MAGAZINE.

For particulars of the above see Advertisement pages at the end of this Volume.

CONSECRATED RECREATION;

OR,

The Christian's Leisure Time.

BY THE REV. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'THE SURE FOUNDATION,'
'THE CONSECRATED LIFE,' 'REST UNTO YOUR SOULS,'
'FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT,' 'MY LORD'S MONEY,' ETC.; EDITOR
OF 'CHRISTIAN PROGRESS,' 'LIVING WATERS,' AND
'THE CHURCHMAN'S PENNY MAGAZINE.'

'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.'—COL. iii. 17.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
1884.

LIBRARIES
CHICAGO, ILL.
BV4598
B8

SMALLER WORKS BY THE REV. ERNEST BOYS.

Price 1d. each, or 7s. per 100, post free.

PARDON AND PEACE: A Word for the Anxious.

This little book is for Evangelistic use and general distribution.

CONSECRATED MARRIAGE: A Word of Caution to Young Christians.

A chapter on a very important subject, reprinted from 'The Consecrated Life."

WISDOM FOR YOUNG LADIES: A Mission Address to Ladies' Schools.

Specially for distribution in Schools.

These Books can be ordered of all Booksellers.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W.

Exchange Duplicate
University of Western Ontario

1046777
dig.

PREFACE.

—o—

THE subject of Recreation is not, as it may seem to some at first sight, of small importance in the Christian life. The writer will not here repeat what he has urged in this little volume about its importance to the Christian, but will merely add to it an opinion of great weight, in support of what he has already said.

One of the first London physicians lately advised a nervous and overwrought patient, a true Christian, but whose physical and mental condition made faith's grasp of Christ but weak and faint, that Recreation must be entered on '*as a religious duty*.'

It was a happy expression and a very true one. But so few people seem to view Recreation in this light. To some it has seemed strange, and 'a new light,' to look upon their daily occupations and work as inseparably connected with their religion, and, indeed, a part

71023

of it.[1] But they 'see it now,' and are, as a consequence, increasingly happy in their every-day life. The author now wants to show them something further still in the life of Consecration, that their Recreation, in its proper time and place, and when judged of in the light of allegiance to Christ, is as real a part of their religion as anything else.

Many earnest Christians are suffering from nerve and brain weakness, with all the physical depression resulting from it, because they have paid little or no attention to this subject; they have thought of all Recreation as something more or less worldly, and have had very little to do with it.

The author hopes and prays that this little volume may be used of God in convincing His people that, in consecrating their Recreations to Him, and enjoying them as from Him, they may as truly serve Him in them, as in other things which are more generally thought of as connected with His service.

[1] See on this subject, *The Consecrated Life* (published by Nisbet & Co., price 1s.), chap. iv. (Consecration in Daily Life), chap. v. (Consecration in Family Life), and chap. viii. (Consecration in Business Life).

CONTENTS.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTORY,	9
II.	THE NEED OF RECREATION,	17
III.	SANCTIFIED JUDGMENT,	25
IV.	DOUBTFUL THINGS,	34
V.	'THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE DO IT,'	44
VI.	INFLUENCE UPON OTHERS,	52
VII.	TESTS FOR RECREATIONS,	61
VIII.	SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY,	81
IX.	RESTRAINING YOUNG PEOPLE'S AMUSEMENTS,	91
X.	GAINING INFLUENCE FOR GOD,	103
XI.	RECREATIONS OPEN TO THE CHRISTIAN,	115

CONSECRATED RECREATION.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

Introductory.

THE subject of Recreation, from the standpoint of the Christian who wishes to be wholly consecrated to the Lord, is a very large, a very important, and, in some respects, a very difficult one.

It is a very large subject, because it extends over such an immense variety of occupations which are, rightly or wrongly, spoken of as Recreations, and out of which the Christian must, with sanctified judgment, choose out what is consistent with his holy calling. When the subject is dealt with practically, as we hope to do in these papers, we shall speak plainly, and without reserve, on some of those which

must, more or less, constantly present themselves to our readers. Thus we hope to help many to a right and clear view upon the whole subject as a principle, as well as upon sundry details of it in the putting of those principles into actual practice.

It is also a very important subject. Indeed, its practical importance cannot well be overstated. Recreation is, or, if it is not, it ought to be (as we shall see farther on), a very real thing in the Christian's life. Some of the very deepest interests of both body and soul revolve around it, as we shall presently show.

Moreover, its importance in the Christian life appears very plainly from the fact that it is just the sphere in which many Christians find an element of unhappiness to mar the joy of their religious life. We have formed this opinion after an experience of much personal dealing with young Christians on this subject. So many Christians have strong doubts about the nature of certain Recreations. They are carried almost irresistibly into them by the powerful tide of pressure from parents, brothers, sisters, relations, friends, companions, etc. They are persuaded, and they often find it easier to give way to the persuasion than to resist it,

that there is 'no harm' in them. But still they are not *sure* about it; and, as a necessary result, they are not happy. We are convinced that very many, if asked to point out the spots in their Christian life which were not always and altogether bright, would name this one as a frequent source of doubt and depression. If this could be once clearly set right, they would be very much happier than they are.

Then, again, there is the bearing of his Recreations on the Christian's own spiritual life. Not only is the direction in which he looks for Recreation an important index of the depth or shallowness of his spiritual condition. But the Recreations themselves leave their mark very decidedly upon him. Foolishness, levity, and worldliness, at first hardly allowed at all, but still just permitted, only occasionally, and by way of Recreation, gradually eat their way into his soul. By degrees, from mere familiarity with the evil, and from that loss of spiritual-mindedness which results from this, his sense of divine things is deadened. After a while, things which were once only just allowed seem to have no such 'harm' as they once appeared to have. They are now eagerly sought. And the end of it all is a terrible

backsliding. Most important, then, is it to keep a careful guard over oneself in the matter of Recreation.

Then the importance of the subject again appears from the influence which the Christian's Recreation has upon others. And this acts in very different ways, according to the spiritual condition of those about him.

In the first place, there are always those who *desire* to find fault with the religion of Christ. However much they may be convinced of the need of something higher and better than they have, they do not wish to decide for Christ. These gladly attack religion, and religious people, upon every possible ground, in order to strengthen themselves in an unconverted life. They are not slow to do so on the score of Recreation or amusement; and they do so, curiously enough, in two exactly opposite directions. Either they object that there is no such thing as Recreation or amusement in the Christian life; and some Christians, no doubt, give them a reason for saying so. From this standpoint very naturally they conclude that a life of devotion to Christ would be unsuitable for themselves. Much harm is undoubtedly done when the Christian gives the least encouragement

to such an idea. But if, on the other hand, the Christian allows himself a somewhat wider range of Recreation and amusement, then, with a strange inconsistency, the worldling shifts round, and tries to show that, because so much is allowed in this way, the true Christian is after all just as worldly as he is himself, and that all religious profession is a sham.

Then, again, there are the really seeking, but still undecided, souls to be found everywhere. They want to decide for Christ, and are very properly 'counting the cost' of so doing (Luke xiv. 28). These are influenced somewhat in the same way as those just mentioned. They are often thrown back, or drawn forward, by the conclusions at which they arrive upon this very question. Perhaps they are young and full of buoyant spirits; or, at all events, they have a keen sense of their need of thorough-going Recreation, as well as a decided enjoyment of it. They very naturally look to the Christians of their acquaintance, and are much influenced by what they see in them.

It then becomes so very important, for the sake of both these classes of people, that the Christian should 'walk circumspectly' (Eph. v. 15), as regards Recreation and amusement;

and that he should err, if possible, in neither direction. He should show that true Christians can enjoy many of the pleasures of life, and enter innocently into its intellectual as well as its bodily and physical Recreations.

Then, lastly, there is the Christian's influence on his fellow-believers. Recreation is the rock upon which many a believer has made shipwreck. Some have shut themselves off from it in almost every form, till they have broken their own health by it, and have given much occasion, both to the scoffers and to the seekers of whom we have spoken, to find objections against religion. Others, again, have been led on from one doubtful and dangerous Recreation to another, till they have fallen away from any serious profession of religion at all. But the rightly instructed believer should seek to exercise a healthy influence in the matter. By precept and example, he should endeavour to show that while some forms of Recreation can be heartily followed out to the glory of God, others must just as earnestly be avoided.

But the question is undeniably a very difficult one. People's circumstances vary so considerably. What one requires another does not. Then opinions differ so much, even

among professedly religious people. Besides this, it is difficult always to arrive at a right estimate of several things. They *appear* so different to what they really *are*. The harm in them is not always on the surface; but often very latent, and needing a very spiritual mind to detect it. Again, mere ignorance, or innocence as to sin involved, causes some to encourage what, if they knew more of the world and its sins, they would feel obliged to avoid. Or Recreations which are innocent enough in themselves may very often lead into bad associations, or open the way to unquestionable evils.

Moreover, the difficulty is often increased by the fact that relatives and friends, whom they are bound to obey, or, at all events, to respect, often urge the believer to engage in some Recreations which, if left to himself, he would, without hesitation, leave alone.[1]

Now it must be confessed that this subject, so important and so difficult, is seldom taken up by religious writers; and when it is, it is not always treated in a plain and practical way, and not always consistently with sanctified common

[1] This special aspect of difficulty will be fully dealt with in a later chapter. See p. 81

sense. Random and sweeping statements are made against some things and in favour of others, leaving the Christian still in the dark as to where the evil really lies, and, consequently, he is unable to give a reasonable explanation to his friends for his adopting some Recreations, while he avoids others.

Yet, surely, it is a question which should be plainly dealt with from the standpoint of personal religion. The Christian Church must not ignore or shelve it. And we shall endeavour in the present volume to unfold the subject, so as to be a help to those who wish to include their Recreations among the things which they do 'to the glory of God.'

CHAPTER II.

The Need of Recreation.

IN order to discuss our subject usefully and profitably, we must clearly understand the need and nature of Recreation. The necessity for this arises from the fact that the subject is viewed by people from so many different standpoints, mainly because the circumstances of people's lives differ so widely.

As a case in point, it may be mentioned that a Christian soldier, after reading the former chapter on its first appearance in *Christian Progress*,[1] wrote to the author, expressing his fear that the papers would be 'very little help' to himself and his comrades. He says that soldiers 'do not need Recreation;' and further, that 'in their line of life what is

[1] This is a magazine of Help and Encouragement in Christian Life, edited by the present author, price 1d. monthly. It is published by Bemrose & Sons, 23 Old Bailey, London, and may be ordered of all booksellers.

called Recreation is entirely out of the question, having become so unclean and wicked.' 'The best recreation a Christian soldier can have,' he says, 'is to go hunting after his lost comrades and backsliders.'

Such an expression only shows how utterly impossible it is for some to enter into the thoughts and difficulties of people in other conditions in life. But, at the same time, it shows us that our subject is one which must be very thoughtfully and carefully handled, so as to make it as useful as possible to all classes.

There is no doubt that to some what others speak of as Recreation has very little meaning. The circumstances of their life do not call for it so pressingly; and perhaps not at all. To some, indeed, the whole life is very little else than what might be called Recreation. The difficulty is to find something really serious and useful to occupy time on their hands. It is so with many a young lady in her father's house, after leaving school; or in her own house, before the cares of family life multiply. It is so with not a few young men, especially in the upper classes of life. It is so, also, with a number of more elderly people. When,

however, we understand what Recreation really means, we shall find that there is little or nothing of it in such lives as these.

Those, again, who live an open, out-door life —the soldier, the sailor, the farmer, the labourer, and such like—little understand the needs of others whose whole life is one continued strain of mind, or body, or both. Then there are those whose work in life involves very little deep thought, and not much weight of responsibility. To these the need of definite recreation may not appear so strong as we have said.

But in mentioning all these conditions of life, we omit by far the larger proportion of our fellow-Christians. There remains the enormous number of hard brain-workers, such as those engaged constantly in business, professional people, students (young and old), preachers, writers, earnest Christian workers, teachers, parents, and others whose energies are taxed to the utmost with family, domestic, and financial cares, those whose daily work involves long hours of application. These we believe to constitute by far the larger number of our readers; and to these the subject of Recreation is one into which they can thoroughly enter.

Before explaining clearly the nature of Recreation, it may be well to say that we are not overlooking the privilege and duty of 'casting all our care upon the Lord.' Some might say thoughtlessly that this removes the need for Recreation. But such a thought springs from a wrong conception of the whole subject. To 'cast all our care upon Him' is a wonderful help in the most busy and trying life. It removes all worry and wearing anxiety. But it does not remove the necessity for thought and effort. It may, and indeed does, lessen the wear and tear of life, but much must still remain.

It will never do to overlook the fact that, after all, we are but human, and subject to fixed, unalterable laws, in which the whole secret of our being is enfolded. Our soldier correspondent, mentioned above, also wrote, 'Our daily prayer is, "Thy will be done on *earth* as it is in heaven." I wonder if the saints in heaven require Recreation.' Our friend's simple earnestness, although opposed both to reason and logic, to science and experience, reveals a mistake into which many are apt to fall. They forget that they are not yet 'saints in heaven,' and that God's will is

to be done on earth, *with due regard to our earthly conditions*, just as in heaven it is done *with regard only to heavenly conditions.* It is so easy to forget that we are 'dust' (Ps. ciii. 14), until we are forcibly reminded of it by a long trying illness, which might have been avoided by more regard to the rules of health.

This opens up the actual reason why the need of Recreation is so pressing and absolute. Those who know anything of the laws of their own nature are well aware that life is simply a process, continually going on, of waste and repair. The tissues of the body and of the brain and nervous system waste with every movement or every effort of the mind. This waste is repaired by the circulation through every part of fresh blood, supplied by the food consumed, and oxygenized by contact with air in the lungs.

Bodily health is maintained by the supply being equal to the waste. But the power of each one to repair, while it varies with different constitutions, is limited in all. Hence it follows that, if the waste exceeds the power of supply, mischief results; there is bodily overstrain.

And especially so is it with the brain, the most delicate organ of the body, the centre of

thought, and the controlling power of the whole system. All mental effort means waste of brain tissue. This is also repaired in the way just described; but it is most effectually carried on when the brain is in a state of repose. Sleep is the most favourable opportunity for this; and all brain-workers should sleep as long as nature demands it.

But the great secret of mental vigour is not to tax the brain beyond the power one possesses to repair the waste. When this is not attended to, mental over-strain is the result; work becomes burdensome, and at last impossible. A general breakdown of the whole system follows.

Here is the place of Recreation. Its main use is to break in upon and relieve mental effort, and so to prevent the waste of brain power from exceeding the supply. And, when this is well understood, Recreation appears as a positive duty; and as one of the necessary features of life it can be employed as much 'to the glory of God' as the eating and the drinking or anything else, so long as it is confined to what can be done in Him and for Him.

The fact is, that very many earnest Christians, either from settled habit, or from ignorance of

the laws of nature, overlook the fact that they are 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (Ps. cxxxix. 14). They forget that the processes of life are ever going on within their bodily frames, and that they need attention and care, if life is to be healthful and prolonged.[1]

We have dealt fully with this part of the subject for several reasons. Firstly, because we are pointed to the reason why Recreation is such a pressing need. Secondly, because when, in succeeding chapters, we enlarge upon the *principles* which are to influence the Christian in his Recreation, we shall have a most important guiding star in the matter. We shall see that the health aspect of the subject is a touchstone by which all proposed Recreation must be tried, and by which, apart from all other considerations of right and wrong, it must stand or fall. Judging by this standard alone, we should find it far easier to decide for or against several things, than when trying, however earnestly, to discover what is right or wrong from other considerations.

Again, thirdly, we have entered fully into this view of our subject, because, now that we have

[1] This subject has been fully dealt with in a chapter entitled 'Consecration and Health,' in *The Consecrated Life* (published by Nisbet & Co., price 1s.).

shown our need of Recreation, by reference to the laws of our physical being, we are able to see clearly that it *can*, in the highest sense, be consecrated to God. He could have made us so as not to need it at all; but He has not done so. Our need of it, therefore, is His law for the well-being of our bodily life. When we observe this law we are acting in obedience to Him; when we neglect it, we inflict injury upon the bodies which He has made, and which are so absolutely His very own. We disregard no merely human law of medical science, but a law which He has made for us; and we disobey not that law only, but God who made it.

Recreation, then, falls very plainly within the limits of the believer's Consecration to God. It is an act of obedience to Him; and it may, in every sense, be classed among the 'all things' which are to be regarded as '*from* Him,' as to their source; '*through* Him,' as to the method and spirit of their accomplishment; and '*to* Him,' as to the object for which they are done (Rom. xi. 36). Indeed, not only *may* it be so, but it *must* be so, if we are to be wholly consecrated to God.

CHAPTER III.

Sanctified Judgment.

FROM the standpoint we have now reached, namely, that Recreation consecrated to God is a very necessary part of Christian life, we can go on to consider certain general principles which are to guide us in the matter. And when we come to apply these principles to the practical details of Recreation, we shall find that, while the principles themselves are rigid, and of universal obligation on all who are really believers, the application of them may vary somewhat, and perhaps considerably, according to the sanctified judgment of each one.

Our first general principle arises at once from this. It is the almost obvious one, that every matter connected with Recreation *is really* to be considered in the light of *sanctified* judgment.

But what is 'sanctified judgment?' It is the settling of every question that arises in the light

of that 'account of himself to God' which 'every one of us' hereafter 'shall give' (Rom. xiv. 12). In that account our Recreation will surely be included, as to its amount, its nature, and its consistency with Christian profession. Then, at all events, the most 'sanctified judgment' will be passed upon it; and the desire of the Christian, in view of this, should be to seek such light and guidance as will enable him to anticipate, as far as he is able to do so in his present condition of infirmity and liability to err, 'the judgment-seat of Christ,' before which, in regard to this, as well as to everything else, he is hereafter to 'appear' (2 Cor. v. 10).

So, then, the question to be asked about every proposed Recreation becomes a very searching and solemn one. It is no longer what the unconverted world says, or even what the so-called 'Christian world' thinks. Nor is it what the believer thinks himself, except so far as he really tries to exercise 'the mind of Christ,' which the believer is said to possess (1 Cor. ii. 16). But it is just and only this, *What will Christ say of it? What does He think of it?* This is the highest conception of the 'sanctified judgment,' which the believer will do well to pass, not upon his Recreations

only, but equally so upon each and every action of his earthly life.

Judged by this standard, much that passes for permitted Recreation, even among those who make a distinctly religious profession, would give way. But very few take the question up to a standard quite so high as this. Most people stop short of it, and in its place adopt a most miserable substitute. If only they can find *other Christians* who will sanction what they have some little doubt about themselves, that is enough for them. And especially if these happen to be making a very high profession of religion. The fact that many 'very good people,' and not a few ministers of religion, sanction several very questionable amusements, is sufficient to remove any lingering doubt, and to persuade them that these are right.

But it is a most dangerous standard by which to decide. And the danger lies not only in the obvious fact that any standard short of the only right one *must* be dangerous, but even more so in the less obvious fact that the standard substituted for the right one is so deceptive, just because it appears to resemble it. A counterfeit is always the more dangerous the more closely it resembles the reality, and is

therefore the more easily taken for it. And for this reason, the judgment of an unspiritual or worldly-minded Christian is the very worst standard by which to decide any question connected with practical Christian life.

It is a fact, although a very sad one, that a thoroughly worldly man, who makes no profession of religion at all, is often a far better judge of what is inconsistent in a Christian than one who professes religion. Many a worldling has a very keen appreciation, even from the light of what we may call '*un*-sanctified common sense,' of what a professor of religion ought to be. He sees in religion, although for various reasons, and perhaps often for this very reason itself, he leaves it alone, a far greater reality than many who profess it. He is often stumbled, and in some cases, humanly speaking, his conversion is hindered, by the very worldliness of religious professors. These are in reality but little different from himself. They fall so lamentably short of the standard which he has raised in his own mind, from the most casual reading of the Scriptures, of what ought to be the outcome of religion really received. It may be that he encourages the Christian in his inconsistency,

for he finds in it a salve for his own conscience in an out-and-out worldly life; but in his heart he despises him for it.

To return, however, to the professing Christian, worldly-mindedness utterly deadens his spiritual perception and perverts his judgment. And so far is this terribly true, that there is no form of worldly amusement and gaiety, so long as it just falls short of open and positive wickedness, which will not find some Christians, whose spiritual level is low, to sanction it. The 'future prospects' of the young are so often supposed, by parents and others, who cannot trust God to provide for them, to lie in the world, and this is thought to be quite sufficient sanction for any amount of frivolous gaiety and worldly conformity. To 'get on in life,' to secure 'useful friends,' to 'marry well,' or even 'not to appear singular,' is reason enough for some Christians to advise young believers to fall in with much that even a sensible worldling regards as inconsistent with a religious life.

We have written at length on this principle which is to guide the Christian in the choice of Recreation, because it is so very important. The first thing which many do who are in doubt about any particular is to ask advice from some

Christian friend; or, if they have no such friend, they regret it and wish that they had.

Asking advice is becoming a great deal too common. With some, no doubt, it is an attempt to settle a question after many sincere but fruitless attempts to settle it themselves. It still remains doubtful, and they are tempted to think that some one else might help them to a right decision. In these cases, however, there is a more excellent way, which we shall presently show.

But in very many cases, the asking of advice is an attempt to shift from themselves to others a responsibility which cannot be so shifted. Of course, in cases where doubtful amusements are forced on young Christians by those whose authority it is impossible to resist, the responsibility rests with those who insist on them.[1] But when the choice lies open, the responsibility of a wrong decision is not to be shifted from the one who asks advice to the one who advises wrongly, although, of course, the latter incurs a responsibility as well. Indeed, to advise in any direction is a responsibility; and we would counsel those whose advice is asked to refer the question always back again to the one who

[1] On this subject, see chap. viii.

asks it. When asked, 'What do *you* think?' our own plan is first of all to reply, 'But what do you think *yourself?*'

Moreover, there are not a few cases in which the asking of advice is simply a sort of spiritual or moral laziness, which seeks to avoid the trouble of seeking a solution of the difficult questions of Christian life. This is a condition of things which all whose advice is asked should endeavour to probe and to correct.

We say this because we are convinced that in most cases it is far better *not to ask advice.* Nehemiah's plan, 'I consulted *with myself*' (in the margin, 'my heart consulted in me:' Neh. v. 7), is far better. It resulted in outspoken, decisive action, which, had he previously consulted with several friends, would most certainly have been considered to be 'going too far.'

Or again, such different advice is often given by Christian friends, just because the level of their spiritual attainments varies so exceedingly, that asking advice of one and another, instead of removing the difficulty, very often only increases it considerably. Apparently good people give directly opposite advice; and the perplexed doubter is involved in further perplexity. Many who have afterwards learned the importance of

Nehemiah's 'consulting with himself,' have found that they never came to any satisfactory settlement of their difficulties until they ceased to ask the advice of others, and sought to solve them directly with the Lord.

We counsel the Christian, in all matters concerning Recreation and amusement, as well as about everything else, to 'consult with himself,' and to let 'his heart consult in him.' Let believers take their question to the Scriptures, and more even than that, let them take it to the Lord, and deal heart to heart with Him about it. Let them see how it looks when they are bowed down in spirit before Him. Let them try to view it, however dimly and afar off, in heavenly light. Let them picture the judgment-seat of Christ, and the Lord dealing with His people there, not (as so many seem to think) about the already settled question of their salvation, but about 'the things done in the body' (2 Cor. v. 10), and the 'reward' or the 'loss' (1 Cor. iii. 14, 15) which is to follow them. Let them present their doubtful thing to Him. How does it now appear? Can they submit it to His judgment with a joyful confidence that He will approve and own it? Or is there an irresistible consciousness that under these cir-

cumstances they would rather not have done it? Is there even a secret suspicion that He would not approve?

This is that anticipation of the judgment-seat of Christ, which, as we have already said, realizes the fullest meaning of the exercise by the believer of a 'sanctified judgment.' What will stand this test may be heartily performed 'as unto the Lord.' All that cannot stand it must just as heartily and at all costs be laid aside.

But what of some things about which we still remain in doubt? This touches upon another of those principles which are to guide us in all our Recreation; and we must keep it for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

Doubtful Things.

WE come now to the second principle which we should be careful to observe in all matters relating to Recreation, and, indeed, to everything else besides. Briefly stated, it is this, that *doubtful things must, for the present, be laid aside.*

Let none who have read the last chapter be surprised that we still speak of 'doubtful things.' We know that many speak as if they believed in some sort of direct divine inspiration, almost amounting to an inward voice, which guides them how to act. We do not share this belief, which too easily mistakes well-meaning human impulse for divine guidance.

No doubt, when we really bring our difficulties to the Lord, an impression may be wrought upon our minds that we should either do or not do the particular thing in question. But this we believe to be the conclusion drawn from

our previous reasonings on the subject, now that we have brought them all into the only light in which every thing assumes its true importance, and in which, if anywhere, we are most likely to take a right view of things.

Our own belief is that the Spirit of God guides us by means of sanctified common sense. It is not that He *thinks for us*, but rather *teaches us how to think*, so giving us a right judgment in all things. He enables us to estimate rightly the facts of the case, *so far as they are actually before us at the time.*

But it will occasionally happen, and to some dispositions, perhaps, very often, that, after all, some points about Recreation will seem difficult to settle, even in the exercise of the principle already laid down of setting all our questions before the Lord Himself.

When we spoke of that as the first principle upon which to decide all our questions, we did not say that everything can always be decided in this way alone. What we insisted upon was that this is the only light in which questions of right and wrong can be properly estimated at all. But we by no means think that, even when we try to settle any difficulty in the anticipation of our Lord's judgment upon it, we

shall always be able immediately to make up our minds about it. To desire, however earnestly, to do only what is right in His sight, will not of itself remove our doubtfulness.

Indeed, we can understand that in some respects it might even *increase* it. The standard is so high, and the issues are so important, when we view all our questions thus in the highest light of all. And the result of this may well be, that some questions which we might more generally and more quickly settle, if only less important issues were involved, become more difficult of solution, from the simple reason that even the smallest things assume an immense importance when considered as viewed by our Lord Himself. The very earnestness of our desire to do rightly in the least things would prompt a thorough weighing of them from all sides, and from every possible point of view. And this is just where the difficulty is increased.

A shallow, unthinking mind, which only views things on the surface, can far more easily decide one way or another, from the very reason that it has less material before it out of which to form a judgment. A number of considerations, tending at all events to qualify, if not to

prevent altogether, a decided opinion, are not present to it at all.

A really thoughtful mind, on the other hand, penetrates below the surface. It grasps the *principle* which underlies any particular form of Recreation, and which may in itself be harmless enough, although the actual Recreation, as employed by some, may appear dangerous. And from this standpoint it may be unable to condemn, and eventually may even approve much that a less thinking mind would at once condemn. Or, again, it may look beyond to further results, to which apparently harmless forms of Recreation may *tend;* and so it may eventually decide against much that another, who did not look so far, would approve. It sees considerations which the shallower mind does not see; and thus it is often unable so rapidly to arrive at a decision, at which another less penetrating mind, either rightly or wrongly, arrives at once.

Again, some have more knowledge of the world than others. They know, either from their own bitter personal experience, or from having kept their eyes and ears open in their intercourse with others, far more than others know of the sin which abounds on every side,

and which lurks behind, or actually results from, some forms of so-called Recreation. They see sin, sometimes of the most open and glaring sort, or, at all events, very subtle temptations which may result from some Recreations, where others would suspect nothing of the sort. We shall have occasion to speak of this later on in these papers. (See p. 74.) But so much must be said here to clear up the view of the subject now under consideration. It is, however, this deeper knowledge of the world which makes it very difficult all at once to decide absolutely either for or against a thing, which, after all, *may* not result in anything wrong, and which is, perhaps, in some respects, a permissible and useful Recreation.

We have dwelt thus at length with this aspect of our subject, because we wish to lead our readers to a really *intelligent* view of it. Intelligent Christianity is one of the wants of our day. Unintelligent and thoughtless assertions abound on all hands, and do much harm. But we wish all who read these chapters to take an intelligent view of Recreation from the standpoint of a Consecrated Life. We want them not only to know, as every one must, that in Christian Life there are 'doubtful things,' but

really to understand *how it comes about* that some matters do thus remain doubtful.

Some important results will follow from such an intelligent view of the subject.

1. In the first place, Christians, while they judge *themselves* very carefully, will be less inclined to judge other people. They will understand that others may have good grounds for thinking differently from themselves. This will be an important point gained. In matters of Recreation, perhaps almost more than in anything else, there is so much forgetfulness of the divine precept, 'Let us not judge one another any more' (Rom. xiv. 13).

2. Another result will be, that none will be discouraged because they feel unable all at once to decide about any matter of Recreation. Discouragement is a terrible hindrance in the Christian life; and many young Christians may think that something is wrong with them, just because they still regard as doubtful some matters about which others seem to have decided. They must not doubt their own conversion, because they feel unable at present to see things as other Christians see them. The very doubtfulness may arise from the fact that they are *more thoroughly* weighing the question than

others have done. If they are conscious of the desire to settle their difficulties so as to meet the Lord's approval, this is the very best evidence of true conversion, and they must not be cast down because they are not immediately able to do so.

3. A further result may also well arise from these thoughts. It shall take the form of advice on our part not too hastily to decide upon points that seem doubtful. It is better to take plenty of time to decide, than to have to change, after a too hasty decision has been replaced by a more mature one. To make a real stand, one way or another, on any matter, so as to be also a help to others, 'every man' must 'be fully persuaded in his own mind' (Rom. xiv. 5). And as this result is only reached by an intelligent Christian after careful consideration and thought, we should hold every question in suspense until this full persuasion has been fully reached. If we understand what to do with our doubtful things, during the time of settlement, we need be in no hurry to decide.

This brings us to the more practical part of this chapter on 'doubtful things.'

What are we to do with them? We say most unhesitatingly *they must be left alone*, with the same decision as if they were known to be

wrong. And for this reason we may take as long as we need for the formation of a decided opinion; because, at all events, we are upon the safe side during the period of decision.

At the same time, this remark must be applied with just a little reserve. Of course, if our hesitation to decide only means that we are refusing ourselves a permitted Recreation, the consequence is but small, however long we take in forming a decision. But if by ourselves refraining from what is really innocent and useful, we are influencing others needlessly against our religious profession, it becomes a more serious matter; and there should therefore be no *needless* delay in making up our minds.

At the same time, the line of action as to our doubtful things is quite clear. We must let them alone. This is made very plain from St. Paul's declaration in Rom. xiv. He is speaking specially of meats, which some might regard as clean, and others as unclean; but the principle which he lays down is of the most general application,—'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin' (ver. 23). He very clearly says, that whatever is not done with the hearty consciousness of its being right, is to be regarded, for the time being, as wrong. All that the

Christian permits must be 'of faith;' done, that is, in the belief that God approves and accepts it. Whatever does not come under this, falls of necessity under the head of 'sin.'

And a moment's careful consideration reveals at once the heavenly wisdom of this teaching. The experience of every true Christian heartily endorses it. What is it that so much shadows his communion with God? Sin, of course, for the moment. But when that is confessed, and the promised forgiveness is grasped by the hand of faith, the sky again becomes clear. Doubtful things, however, when indulged in, have no such remedy. We do not feel able to confess them as sins. Indeed, to do so would be to settle the question at once. At the same time, we are not *sure* that they are quite right. The result of it is, that, to all intents and purposes, they operate on our minds and hearts exactly like positive transgressions, only there is no remedy at hand. They remain upon the conscience, and hinder the communion with God, and make the heart heavy. The heart-experience of every true Christian will re-echo St. Paul's words, 'Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth' (Rom. xiv. 22).

Then, in dealing with others about things which we consider doubtful, let us honestly say that this is what we think, and that for this reason we leave them alone. We should clearly explain to them what we feel about doubtful things, and how they involve sin, at all events to us. We must be very careful to show then that we have no wish to condemn them in other people.

Following such a line, its advantageous effects on those around us will quickly appear. They would see that, while we were thoroughly in earnest, we were also large-minded enough not hastily to condemn. They would be led to *think for themselves* about these doubtful things, far more than if we too quickly condemned them. They would respect us, while we are making up our minds; and, when we have done so, thoughtfully and carefully, they would be far more readily influenced by our example, and we should be prepared to give that plain and intelligent reason for what we do or for what we leave undone, which those who differ from us ask so often and so reasonably, and which Christians are so very seldom able to give.

CHAPTER V.

'The Spirit in which we do it.'

ANOTHER very important principle to follow in choosing Recreation is, that we must be guided by the actual nature of a thing itself, so far as we can determine it, rather than (as it is so often expressed) by 'the spirit in which we enter into it.' A wrong practical conclusion often results from losing sight of this.

In speaking thus, we know that we differ from a great many. We constantly hear people say that, after all, it is the spirit in which we enter into a thing, rather than the thing itself, which must guide us as to what is right in the way of Recreation.

We will very carefully examine this idea, and see wherein it is defective.

On the mere face of it, it sounds very plausible; and people who do not think much below the surface are so easily carried away by it that

they are often led into doubtful Recreations. Their mistake is this: they give a general and unlimited application to a principle which is perfectly true in itself, but which can only be safely applied in a strictly limited way.

There is no doubt that, when *confined to the proper sphere of its application*, this principle is most entirely true; but when applied ever so little beyond this limit, it leads to dangerous conclusions. The danger, however, lies in the wrong application of it, and not in the principle itself. A truth, wrongly applied, may be just as dangerous as open error.

Let us explain fully what we mean. It is quite true that the spirit in which we enter into anything is to be carefully noted, *if the thing into which we are entering is right in itself.* But that is a question to be settled first. For instance, we may make a thing which in itself is perfectly right and innocent to become utterly wrong by entering into it in a wrong spirit. But we cannot make a thing which is in itself dangerous or wrong to become safe or right, in any sense of the word, by the spirit in which we enter into it.

We will take extreme cases on each side, to demonstrate this more clearly. The meeting

for the worship of God, so thoroughly right in itself, may be entered into in a spirit of worldliness, wilfulness, or some other form of self-seeking, which may turn it into positive sin. But, on the other hand, it would be impossible to enter into an act of positive dishonesty in a right spirit, so as to make it permissible to the Christian. Some may object to the choice of such extreme cases; but the extreme case establishes the principle, and it has only to be added that the same holds good in all other things which are not so obviously right or wrong.

In order to remove an objection which may occur to some, we must refer again to St. Paul's teaching about doubtful things, which we referred to in the previous chapter; because even that is capable of a wrong application. Many, we fear, draw for themselves a permission to enter into very dangerous things from St. Paul's advice, forgetting that he was only speaking about matters perfectly and obviously innocent in themselves, but to which some attached a significance which others did not, such as the eating or not eating of certain sorts of meats, or as the observance of one day above another (Rom. xiv. 1–6). These did

not involve questions of guilt or of moral and spiritual danger; and such were made right or wrong by the spirit in which they were taken up.

But we must not press his words beyond this, as if he meant that occupations, companionships, or amusements, dangerous to the spiritual life, and involving various forms of temptation, could become right, if only we entered into them in a Christian spirit, or, as he puts it, 'unto the Lord.' Surely it is very obvious that the apostle's assertion, that there was 'nothing unclean of itself' (ver. 14), is to be strictly limited to the matters under discussion. His writings everywhere clearly show that there were many things which he regarded as 'unclean of themselves,' which no consideration would make right for the Christian.

Equally capable of being misunderstood, and equally dangerous in the misunderstanding, are his words, 'Unto the pure all things are pure' (Tit. i. 15). People quote these words as if they settled the whole question of Recreation. They gather from them that those who are spiritually-minded, or who suppose themselves to be so, need think little about the danger or sinfulness of any form of amusement, but can go through anything unharmed by it.

Now, there is no doubt, and it is the reasonable inference from St. Paul's words, that those who are truly spiritually-minded can and do come in contact, in the necessary calls of duty, as well as in many sorts of Christian work, with much that is connected with sin, and may come out of it all unharmed. But it is very different when, with no call of duty, but merely for pleasure and amusement, they *seek* companionships and recreations of a dangerous sort. No amount of personal purity can make pure or safe any sort of Recreation which in itself has an impure or dangerous tendency. We cannot insist too forcibly upon the truth of this.

Moreover, those who enter into dangerous Recreations, believing that the spirit in which they do so makes it right for them, and on the ground that they have been unharmed by them hitherto, do not know how long this may last. People have said that, although others have felt the worse for such Recreations as dancing and the theatre, they themselves have not. They stand on very dangerous ground. They know, only too well, that others have fallen there; but they believe themselves still to be standing upright, and so they continue upon it.

How do they know when the blow of insidious temptation may not come in an unguarded moment, and they too may fall, as others have fallen before them?

Besides this, we attach little value to a Christian's profession that he has received no spiritual injury from dangerous Recreations. Those who run into such positions of danger are not the ones to form a really spiritual judgment of their own case; and the reason for this will quickly appear. Religious declension in most cases comes on so gradually as hardly to be perceived in its growth; and, as it grows, it so deadens the spiritual susceptibilities, that its continued growth is still hidden from view. Our own strong suspicion always is, that those who profess most to have sustained no spiritual loss, where others acknowledge to have done so, are the very ones who are suffering most severely, and the more so for the very reason that they are not aware of it.

To take a single instance, there are those who say that they are spiritually-minded enough to come home in the early hours of the morning from all the excitement and frivolity (to say the least of it) which every one knows to be involved in a ball-room, and yet are able to

read the Scriptures, and to pray all the same, and to be just as spiritually-minded the next day. Nine-tenths of these people we believe to be deceiving themselves without knowing it. The remaining tenth, of whom it may be more or less true, are standing, to put it in the mildest form, on exceedingly dangerous ground, and we should very earnestly advise them to consider their position.

We have spoken out plainly and strongly on this subject, because we know how needful it is to do so; and we trust that our remarks will save many from falling into the grave mistake of applying 'the spirit-in-which-we-enter-into-it' test to anything whatsoever, until they have first settled whether the thing is right in itself or not.

In the case of almost everything which can possibly go by the name of Recreation there is a *right* and a *wrong* about the thing itself which may be discovered by careful consideration, when judged by the tests which we shall presently suggest, and by which all Recreation should be approved or condemned.

What is right to be done, and what should be left alone, ought to be clearly defined in our own mind; and so clearly, that we can give

our reason for whatever line of action we adopt. And one of the main objects of this volume is to enable our readers to grasp clearly the principles which, when applied to the particular questions before them from time to time, will help them to a right decision.

There still remain other of these principles to consider; and if we dwell upon them at greater length than some, who would prefer our hurrying on to speak of particular forms of Recreation, would wish, it is because we think it more really advantageous to lay a thoroughly solid foundation upon which to build the practical conclusions to which this careful consideration of principles must eventually lead. And we shall not be surprised if most of our readers are enabled, from what we say about the principles, to gather for themselves the sort of advice which we should be inclined to offer about all practical questions of Recreation.

CHAPTER VI.

Influence upon Others.

WE shall now endeavour to lay down certain principles which should guide us in selecting Recreations in view of our influence upon others.

Influence is a very real power, far more so than many imagine; and we each possess it to a very far greater degree than we suppose. Some are obviously in positions of special influence, and have those about them whose conduct they are known to guide. But the influence of others is not at first sight so plain as this. Some even would seem to have little or no influence at all; but this can never really be the case. There is a sphere of influence, common in various degrees to all alike, which is almost unconscious on the part of the one who exercises it; but it is very real all the same. It is exercised even by the merest child, and by those in the most humble

and obscure positions of life; but it comes home with power for good or evil to others.

Now, in the matter of Recreation, this influence, either conscious or unconscious, is exercised in a very forcible degree. Our action is always far more potent in its influence than our argument; our practice than our preaching; our example than our precept. What we *do*, whether we notice it or not, goes much further, weighs far heavier, and is always more readily followed, than what we *say*.

To explain our meaning more fully, we may have much to say about any form of Recreation, as to whether it is advisable or not; or whether, under some circumstances, it might not be so dangerous. But all our limitations, reserves, and cautions, clear enough as they are in our own mind, and guiding, as they may, our own action, go for very little or nothing. They reach comparatively few, while the fact that we have been known to indulge in it, or that we always refuse to do so, speaks clearly one way or the other.

For instance, take a Christian who thinks that, *under some circumstances*, it may not be wrong to attend the theatre, or to dance, and who only does so when these special circum-

stances arise. Such an one will be set down by most people, very naturally, as being in favour of such things; and his example will be quoted and followed by those in any way within the sphere of his influence.

This should make us so specially careful in all matters concerning Recreation, and is a further reply to those who indulge in doubtful and dangerous Recreations, on the plea that *they themselves* have suffered no harm from them. We spoke in our last chapter of the dangerous ground upon which such people stood *as regards themselves.* But now we see the danger from another side. Supposing even that they never really suffer spiritual loss themselves, owing, perhaps, to careful watchfulness and prayer, what about those who will follow them to the scene of danger, and fall there, led and encouraged by their example?

In this connection, we must refer to another rule of conduct which St. Paul very clearly lays down, in reference to the effect of the Christian's action upon others. 'Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God' (Rom. xiv. 22). The meaning is this. The believer may, in regard to some things, have no doubt whatever as to what he should do, *if only he*

himself were concerned. With none but God looking on, he may feel that he can do a thing without danger to himself. No one misunderstands him; no one is led into dangerous paths. This is 'having faith to himself before God.'

But it is quite another thing, when he gives outward expression of that faith before men. They cannot read his heart. They are always liable to misunderstand him, and often are only too ready to do so. Those who have not the same faith, and perhaps are less prayerful and watchful, are led on by the example set before them, and they fall. The line of action is quite clear under these circumstances. 'It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak' (ver. 21). For the sake of others, we must let it alone, however much we might wish it ourselves.

And here let us explain clearly that we allude to things *in themselves* dangerous and doubtful, and not to things which are innocent enough in themselves, but which only become wrong in cases of over-indulgence or too eager devotion to them, which, of course, is a possible danger in regard to almost anything. It is very

necessary to make this distinction clear. The Christian is certainly responsible for his example, if by it he leads others into paths which are dangerous as to their nature. But certainly not, if others follow him into innocent pursuits, but make even these to be wrong by over-absorption in them, or by any other sort of misuse.

Let it then be one fixed principle with us in selecting any Recreations, that the question is not only, what effect will it have upon ourselves? but, is it likely to encourage others in what may prove to them a dangerous snare, even though we ourselves may possibly escape the danger?

This is the teaching of St. Paul in 1 Cor. x. 23–33. He draws a distinction between what is *lawful*, and what is *expedient*, as if there might often be a decided difference between the two.[1] He speaks also of things which may be lawful, but which do not '*edify*,' or build up and strengthen in Christian life either himself or others. And that influence upon others was specially before his mind is evident, because he writes plainly,—'Let no man seek

[1] For a full explanation of the meaning of 'expedient,' see p. 93.

his own, but every man another's wealth' (ver. 24). The question specially before him was that of eating meat which had been offered in sacrifice to idols. The established believer might eat it, because to him an idol was nothing. But if it was specially pointed out to him that it had been so offered, if attention was called to it, or if objection was raised on that score, he is advised to let it alone '*for his sake that showed it*,' as well as 'for conscience sake' (ver. 28). Exactly the same teaching is found in the 8th chapter of the same Epistle, where St. Paul specially points out the danger of leading others by our example to do what they cannot do with a clear conscience. They are 'emboldened' to do so, *because we do* (ver. 10). And so our action becomes 'a stumbling-block to them that are weak' (ver. 9).

The result of this is so sadly described as 'the weak brother for whom Christ died perishing' (ver. 11); and it is shown to be 'sin against Christ' (ver. 12). 'Lest I make my brother to offend,' was reason enough with St. Paul for giving up anything which might lead to so sad a result. And we may be very sure that the same holds good in matters of Recreation, and, indeed, in every other con-

ceivable course of action in which there may be any possibility of others following the example we set, and 'perishing' by so doing.

A few words may well come in here about Christian 'liberty.' It is not uncommon to hear professing Christians speak as if they objected to their liberty being abridged by what others may think and feel; and to speak even slightingly of 'weak brethren,' as if these were rather to be despised than considered. But this is not the true Christian spirit. The fear of causing others to stumble is so clearly described as marking out a real follower of Christ (Rom. xiv. 13, 21; 1 Cor. viii. 9, 13). 'We that are strong' (those, for instance, who feel that they are not likely to be harmed by what injures others) 'ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.' And this precept is enforced by the very highest example: 'For even Christ pleased not Himself' (Rom. xv. 1–3).

Our teaching on this point needs to be very clear, because its right understanding will settle very quickly many a question which arises as to matters of Recreation. There are some Recreations which are confessedly of a dangerous character, involving temptations of various

sorts; and whether we fall under these or not is only a question of whether or not we have grace and strength enough to stand. We say, without hesitation, such Recreations are not permissible to the Christian. Should he be unharmed himself (and who can really say that it is so?), the Spirit and mind of Christ must lead him to set his face against them, because of the many who are *known* to fall under them.

One more consideration shall close this chapter. What we have said hitherto has had reference rather to our influence on our fellow-Christians; those, we mean, who are professing, in some measure at all events, to follow Christ in their daily life. But there remains the outside world; the gay, the giddy, the worldly, who make no such profession at all. How about these? They live for gaiety and excitement. They throw themselves with all their heart into folly and sin. Just those Recreations which most thoughtful Christians think to involve doubtful pleasure they thoroughly enjoy. Is the Christian to enter with them into such amusements and Recreations, in the midst of which they are hastening down the broad way which leads to destruction? or is

he to bear his testimony against the open worldliness of the perishing ones?

'The saints,' we read, are hereafter to 'judge the world' (1 Cor. vi. 2). There is a very real sense in which they will take their part in the last great solemn acts of judgment on the lost. How, we may ask, will they be able to do so, if they have been their companions during life in scenes of vanity and folly, and have not, by example as well as by precept, raised the voice of warning against that 'loving of the world' which is in itself the evidence that 'the love of the Father' is wanting? (1 John ii. 15).

The recollection of this will enable us to settle many a question as to what to do and what to leave alone. Let us be 'pure from the blood of all men,' not only by faithfully declaring 'all the counsel of God' (Acts xx. 26, 27), but also by seeing that we do not encourage either our fellow-Christians, or the world around us, in paths dangerous to spiritual life in the former case, and to all serious thoughts about eternal things in the latter.

CHAPTER VII.

Tests for Recreations.

WE propose now to suggest some *tests* by which to judge of all proposed Recreations. To do so will bring our subject into definite relationship to all that generally goes by the name of Recreation. Without speaking, however, very much, except just in passing, of any particular form of Recreation, the tests which we shall lay down will be such as can be easily applied to every question of the kind.

The first test we would suggest, by which every proposed Recreation must be tried, arises from what is involved in the word *Recreation* itself. It goes to the very root of the matter; and, when fairly applied, would very quickly settle many disputed points.

Let us go back for a moment to our second chapter, in which the need of Recreation was shown to arise from the physical conditions of

our bodily life. The object of Recreation, we saw, is to break in upon and relieve bodily and mental effort, and to enable the brain or the body to repair the waste and exhaustion which such effort has entailed. The idea involved in the very word itself is that of *renewal*, *refreshment*, and *invigoration*. Recreation is not, as some seem to think, to seek relief from work which has already produced exhaustion and waste of mind or body in some form of amusement, which, from bodily exertion involved, from excitement of mind, from late hours, or from other circumstances prejudicial to health, only results in still further exhaustion.

In reference to late hours, it may safely be settled that all Recreations which entail sitting up late at night, whatever else may be said in their favour, must be laid aside on this ground alone.

Here, then, is one test for all Recreation. Does it really bring *rest* to the weary body or mind? Is its tendency thoroughly healthy? Can I expect from it a real *re-creating?*

We need plain teaching on this point, because very much goes under the name of Recreation which, when judged by this test alone, must be found wanting. So exhausting both to mind

and body is the so-called Recreation of more fashionable life, that, after the gaiety and excitement of a 'London Season,' many a constitution is so broken down, that *real* Recreation from it all has to be sought in quietude at the seaside, or in health resorts at home or abroad. And what is true of the greater degree is true also, in its measure, of the lesser degree; so that we should studiously avoid all proposed Recreations which we find to involve bodily or mental fatigue.

It is, however, more with regard to Recreation after *mental* exertion that we are writing now. After severe bodily effort, the only true Recreation is bodily rest. The advice which we would give to those whose daily work entails mere bodily strain, causing conscious fatigue, is simply this: Sit down or lie down, and keep as quite as possible, and certainly avoid all kinds of Recreation which involve further bodily exertion. Such bodily rest may be accompanied by any quiet occupation, by any diversion of mind, in reading, conversation, or study, or by some gentle manual work. But rest of body is the great object in view, and its attainment is comparatively easy.

But in the case of those who work the

brain more than the body it is otherwise. Their Recreation is not so easily settled. Undoubtedly, a certain amount of bodily exertion is beneficial, as a change from mental effort. But this may be easily overdone. People easily forget that mind and body are very closely connected together. A really weary brain is not recreated and strengthened, but more completely exhausted, if bodily exertion is carried to the extent of fatigue. Many who lose sight of this use themselves up very quickly, 'burning the candle at both ends.'

Again, others say that mere change of mental work is Recreation. Cases are quoted of some who literally work their brain all day, by going from one form of work to another. But these are special cases of remarkable mental power, and cannot be safely followed by every one. The safest forms of Recreation for those whose daily work involves mental application is to 'unbend the bow,' by the removal, as far as possible, of anything like severe strain of mind. And we must remember that this severe strain of mind which we should avoid, not only is entailed by further study, but very often comes in disguise in the form of games which involve much mental application for successful play.

These latter are very plausible, because they are called games, but many of them require as much real hard thought, and as much burdening of the memory, as most kinds of study. These should, as much as possible, be avoided.

With these thoughts before us, then, to assist us in forming a judgment on the score of the healthiness or otherwise of proposed Recreations, let us bring all to the test which we have suggested—*Is it re-creating, refreshing, renewing?* If not, whatever else may be said for or against the actual nature of the thing itself, it must be left alone.

Another test should be, *Does it involve me in any special form of temptation?* We say '*special* form of temptation,' because temptation of some sort there must and will be, in some form or other, about almost everything. But we will briefly allude to some of the special temptations to which we refer.

Some kinds of Recreation involve special temptations in regard to dress and personal ornaments. These are temptations, it is true, at all times, especially, but by no means exclusively, to ladies; but none will deny that they are stronger in connection with some things than with others.

We must not, however, forget that these are matters upon which it becomes necessary to bestow a certain amount of attention. In choosing a dress, or arranging a costume, something pretty and becoming might just as well be chosen as what is decidedly the reverse. We think that Christian ladies should endeavour to make all around them bright and cheerful by dress, as well as in every other way; and we have no sympathy with the idea, only too prevalent among some Christians, that religion must go hand-in-hand with all that is peculiar, or gloomy, or dowdy in the way of dress.

Still there is a limit to be placed to attention to dress. And those forms of Recreation which bring it into prominence, or in which it is the chief thing to be thought of, or even in which it engages the thoughts, and suggests comparison with others, and *promotes self-consciousness* of any kind on its account,[1] are best

[1] We think also that many Christians greatly err in adopting habits of dress 'peculiar, or gloomy, or dowdy,' which, just as much as what is gay and fashionable, attract attention to themselves, and promote the self-consciousness we mention. We believe that the only right dress for Christian people is that which attracts no special attention one way or the other.

avoided by the Christian. Wherever dress of this sort is a necessity, equally necessary is the absence of Christians; and more especially so, when any style of dress is expected or required which is inconsistent with the modesty which becomes Christian women. Invitations which mean 'low dresses,' or anything approaching to them, should be decidedly refused.

Then, there are many Recreations which afford special temptation to frivolous and merely foolish talking. It is almost expected of those who join in them. Even serious talk of a worldly sort would be more or less unusual; really spiritual conversation would be considered, from the general tone of all the surroundings, quite out of place, and only to be breathed, if at all, in the very lowest whisper, in some obscure corner of the room. It is so easy to fall into this frivolous way, when we are surrounded by it on all sides; and any scenes of Recreation in which it is the prevailing tone must be avoided by the Christian.

Or again, there is the temptation to conversation of what is known as a 'flirting' sort. Few things so hinder the spiritual life, and young Christians should never expose themselves to

it. It is quite true that this may occur almost anywhere. But any one knows that some Recreations give far more openings for it than others, *e.g.* dancing far more than lawn-tennis. Many Christians are not altogether proof against it, and almost any may be betrayed into it step by step. It is wiser, therefore, to give up all that in the least degree opens up temptation in this direction.

Then again, *Does it engross my thoughts at other times?* When we find our Recreations constantly recurring to our minds at other times, and absorbing our thoughts, when they ought to be otherwise engaged, we may be sure that we are within reach of a temptation which must be carefully avoided. This is especially the case when our Recreations present themselves during seasons of devotional reading, or public and private worship. We thoroughly believe in throwing ourselves, with all our might, into any Recreations which are right and proper. What is right to do at all, is right to do heartily; or, to put it on the highest ground, Recreation entered into, as everything in the Christian life should be, as 'unto the Lord,' and 'to the glory of God,' should be thoroughly enjoyed. It may just as rightly engross our

thoughts at the time as the business or work of life does. But this should be, especially in the case of Recreation, only *while it lasts*. Whatever we cannot shake off, when the time comes to do so, we may be certain has too great a hold upon us, and should be laid aside.

This is, in reality, only another way of saying what every right-minded person will allow, that whatever Recreation seems to unfit us for the daily labour of our earthly calling, and especially for religious exercises and the Lord's work, is not to be engaged in by the Christian.

The same, of course, must be said, if we find that any Recreation so engrosses us that we cannot leave it off, and we allow it to absorb time which should be given to other things. And especially is this the case, if we find ourselves yielding to the temptation of staying up at night, and so curtailing the necessary hours for sleep, because we are so absorbed in Recreation. We believe that *any* Recreation after 9.30 to 10 P.M. is a dangerous snare. Nothing can be true Recreation which robs both body and mind of nature's best restorative, which is sufficient sleep.[1]

[1] No less a snare is the habit, so fascinating to many, of staying up very late engrossed in interesting or

Then there is another point, which may well come under the head of temptations (for to be drawn into what one cannot afford is to yield to a subtle form of temptation), is to ask oneself honestly, *Can I afford it?* Some kinds of Recreation cost little or nothing; and these, of course, must be judged of on other grounds. But others involve more or less expense; and in these lie a temptation to many.

And let us clearly explain that this question, Can I afford it? means more than what many would, at first sight, understand by it. It is more than simply, 'Can I just spare the money, and yet still supply the *necessaries* of life for myself and my family? But there are the claims of charity, and the Lord's work on all sides, which call for help; and very many Christians could help much more than they do, if they made a point of devoting to this a *fixed proportion* of their means, and of making all

amusing conversation. Night is the time for sleep, and should be religiously devoted to it. We say '*religiously*,' because we believe that sleep is, in its way, as much the religious duty of the Christian as his devotions and his Christian work. This thought is more fully entered into in the *The Consecrated Life* (published by Nisbet & Co., price 1s.).

questions of being 'able to afford' other expenses dependent upon what is left after this, which should be a *first charge* on their resources, has been faithfully laid aside.[1] How many think little or nothing of getting some special new article of dress, tickets for entertainments, or pairs of gloves, or spending money in cab fare, and expensive refreshments, etc., or in entertaining friends at their house, who think a great deal of a very little asked for in behalf of Christian work.

The matter of dress will, of course, arise again in this connection. Apart from all other questions arising out of it, which have already been mentioned, we may safely say that, wherever any style of dress is required which we cannot afford (understanding this expression as described above), certainly we ought not to go in search of our Recreation there.

Another most important test is to inquire whether the Recreation proposed *involves temptation to others.* How far it may involve temptation to *oneself* is one aspect of the matter. This has been already dealt with at length.

[1] This subject has been fully dealt with by the present writer in *My Lord's Money, or, the Consecration of Talents* (published by Nisbet & Co., price 1s.).

But a thing which may present no special temptation to oneself, may do so in a very powerful degree to some one else. This has also been touched upon already, but it is of such supreme importance that it must be mentioned definitely among our tests, with some further considerations upon it.[1]

We must bear in mind that those very points which we have mentioned already as likely to offer temptation to ourselves, are just as likely to do so to others. We cannot shake off our responsibility in the matter. And the worst of it is that, while we are able to form some idea as to how far we ourselves may be becoming ensnared by such temptation, we cannot so easily know what is going on in the hearts and lives of others. It may be gaining an insidious footing, and they may be falling under it to an extent of which we may be little aware. It may be, and possibly is, that the conversion to God of some, and the progress of Christian life in others, is thus very seriously hindered, quite unconsciously to ourselves, in those whom we have, either by our invitation or our example, led into forms of Recreation involving direct

[1] See chapter vi.

or indirect temptation. It need hardly be said that the result of honestly applying this test would be to afford an additional reason to the really earnest Christian for decidedly giving up all such doubtful Recreation.

Under the head of Recreations involving temptation to others must come all those which, apparently harmless as far as they go, yet tend to foster tastes which would eventually lead on to more dangerous ground. Some Recreations, which seem innocent to many people, are but the training-school for others, which could not even be spoken of as merely dangerous only, but which must, sooner or later, lead to more or less positive harm. Thus the 'carpet dance,' confined only 'to the family,' is so readily permitted, and seems so very innocent. But it soon leads on to the introduction of others outside the family; and at last it bears its very natural fruit in the craving for dancing wherever it can be had, and at length for the pure and simple ball. So also charades and private theatricals foster tastes which will in time seek gratification in the terrible dangers of the theatre. Again, the system of 'pools,' or prizes for the winner, in really harmless games (even if confined only to children's parties), fosters

the spirit which in time produces the speculator and the gambler.

These are but specimens of what we mean; and it becomes our duty very heartily to oppose such dangers, not only for others, but for ourselves as well, in their earliest possible stage.

And again, we must remember that we may indulge in what we may think harmless amusements, but which others, in perhaps a lower sphere of life, may imitate with the gravest peril. The young lady who imagines that dancing 'does her no harm,' and selfishly enjoys it in consequence, must remember that her tradespeople, her servants, her Sunday scholars, the members of her Bible class, or her poorer neighbours, have just as much right to do so as herself; and they must seek it in the common public dancing halls, or even in the public-house. The same is true of many other things, which a thoughtful mind will suggest to the reader.

But this part of our subject, namely, how far Recreation may involve sin in others, is a very wide one; and to settle satisfactorily the questions to which it gives rise requires more knowledge of the sins of the world than many,

especially young people, possess. But as one comes to know more of human nature, either in ourselves or in others, and to fathom, by actual experience of life, the extent to which it is capable of falling, even in the unwatchful moments of a true Christian, we see much which many regard as harmless, but which we must without hesitation denounce as unsafe.

But here our subject becomes immensely difficult, because it is not always possible to give our reasons for declining any form of Recreation without suggesting thoughts about sin to other minds, in which perhaps they had no place before. Especially is this true in the case of those very real, deeper down, and more secret temptations and sins, about which few like to speak, although thousands and thousands, especially of young men and women, are continually falling under them, but about which others seem in total innocence—temptations which result from all that is involved in dancing, from theatres, from indelicate styles of dress (often adopted even by professing Christians), and from the 'flirting,' which has already been mentioned as so dangerous to spiritual life.

There are Recreations (and especially is this

true of dancing and the theatre) which many professing Christians patronize, merely, we believe, from innocence of the real evils attending on them. Many a life now blighted, degraded, and ruined, was once bright, hopeful, and pure, until these two so-called Recreations rubbed off the bloom of modesty, and opened the way for untold evil. Did people but know a tithe of what the great day of judgment will reveal of the souls ruined by those two of Satan's most successful soul-traps—the dance and the stage—they would shudder to think of giving countenance to the one or the other. But they do not know. They are themselves, it may be, shielded by temperament or circumstances from the fiercest of the temptations, and they have no idea of the havoc worked in other lives, and which they have helped to work, by their encouragement and example on the dangerous ground.[1]

On this head, the only advice we can offer is, that those who know what life really is behind the mere mask of outward pleasure-seeking, should, as they have opportunity, and as prudence suggests, open the eyes of others

[1] Some further remarks on dancing and the theatre will be found at the commencement of chapter xi.

to the underlying sinfulness of much which on the surface seems so innocent.

Another most important test for all Recreation is to ask, *Does it lead me into the company of the openly worldly and unconverted?* While we should always shrink from passing judgment upon the spiritual condition of others, or of drawing a too hard and fast line between those whom we believe to be truly converted to God and other people, yet we can judge whether the company of one or another is leading us into a worldly and frivolous spirit.

Moreover, there are many who do not profess to be 'religious.' They have little or no thought beyond this life. There is nothing uncharitable in regarding them as 'children of this world.' The companionship of such as these is always most dangerous to the Christian. It often cannot be avoided, when they happen to be members of our own family, or relations, or those *necessarily* thrown with us in business or school life. But under these circumstances it calls for special watchfulness and special trusting to be preserved from falling.

When, however, *as a matter of choice*, we seek our Recreation among such, we are indeed running into danger. Let us clearly understand

that worldly companionship in our Recreations is alone enough to make hurtful what would otherwise be harmless enough.

But let none suppose for a moment that the converse of this is true, and that the companionship of professing Christians is warrant enough for indulging in what is doubtful. This is too common a mistake. It is often said that Christians, and even ministers of religion, frequent the dancing-room and the theatre, and that therefore these *must* be harmless. Such Christians and ministers have much for which they will have to 'give account.' But let our readers beware of following any number of Christians or ministers of religion into what seems to them of a doubtful nature.

On the other hand, let us be equally certain that openly worldly companionship makes almost *any* Recreation unadvisable for the Christian. Young believers often suffer a serious check in their spiritual life from never having been plainly warned on this subject, or from neglecting the warnings received. The reason of it is that, however strange it may seem, it is nevertheless true, that worldly people are very much more particular about whom they associate with than most believers are.

They will only mix with others *on precisely their own terms.* They must fix the tone which is to prevail, and believers must conform to it, otherwise the worldly ones will very quickly withdraw. A spiritual tone they will not hear of for a moment, and those who desire it must seek it elsewhere. Worldly society insists on its own conditions in all who wish to join it, and 'the children of this world' are far more outspoken and pronounced for *their* master than professing Christians are for Christ. Hence it is that the Christian should carefully avoid such Recreation, however apparently harmless, which drives him into the companionship of those who are evidently 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.'

Then another test is equally important, especially if any lingering doubt remains as to the expediency or otherwise of any Recreation. *Which will be the safest course, to conform or to decline?* People talk of the advantage of '*erring* on the safe side.' We doubt whether such an expression is not a contradiction in terms. It is better to speak of *standing* on the safe side: for it seems impossible to really *err* on it. Anyway, it is an excellent rule to make for all Recreation,

in regard to its effects, not only upon ourselves, but upon others also, that we will keep *as far off* as we can from danger, rather than run *as close to it as we may*. This is the rule of every sensible person in regard to bodily dangers; and sanctified common sense surely suggests that it should be applied with equal force to dangers of a moral and spiritual sort.

CHAPTER VIII.

Submission to Authority.

WE will now enter into some important questions connected with Recreation, upon which our advice has at times been asked, and which open out some very practical points which most closely concern almost all of our readers, in one way or another.

The first is, to consider the case of some who cannot always choose for themselves, because they are under authority, to which it is absolutely necessary to yield, such as the wife in dealing with her husband, and the son or daughter with parents.

There are many whose position in life does not allow them absolute freedom of choice. When it comes to a real conflict of will and wish, it is their duty to submit, the wife to her husband, the son or daughter to the parent. God's expressed law is that these should *obey;* and when they do so, the

obedience is rendered, in the highest sense, to God Himself, whether the particular matter in hand be great or small, or whatever be its nature. On the other hand, when they do not yield, or yield only with sullenness and temper, they disobey God, whose law they thereby break.

There is only one limit which can possibly be conceived to this absolute law. It is when obedience to the earthly authority would entail the breach of an as plainly expressed law of God as this one is, such as to steal and the like. But where no actual commandment of God exists, and it is merely a question of what we think to be right, then the duty of yielding becomes a necessity.

The bearing of this on matters concerning Recreation is simply this—that, when the authority is pushed to the furthest extreme of insisting, it is the duty of the wife or the child to yield to the wishes of a husband[1] or a parent, when whatever is required is not *expressly* forbidden in God's Word.

[1] Every Christian girl to whom matrimony is proposed should carefully consider how far she is prepared thus to hand over her freedom of action and obedience to another. When that other is not a *decided* Christian, it

At the same time, it is quite right to seek, in a becoming and proper spirit, a relaxation of the authority, if it can be obtained. But so much of our success will depend, humanly speaking, upon the way in which it is done. We do not now allude to the faith and prayer which would, of course, accompany such an attempt, but to the manner in which it is laid before the one whom it is sought to move.

Two features specially characterize this 'becoming and proper spirit' in which to act under the circumstances; firstly, a frank and reasonable statement of our difficulty; and then, as

is positively wrong to do so; and this is one of the strongest reasons why a Christian woman should never entertain for a moment the thought of marrying one whose conversion is not as evident as her own. Otherwise, she places herself in a position in which, sooner or later, she will find herself under the difficulty of being obliged often to act against her own convictions as to her duty to God, just because absolute obedience to her husband is a duty sanctioned by God's law. Many of the difficulties which beset Christian women in their Christian life are simply the result of yielding to a tempting offer of marriage from one whose conversion was, to say the least of it, very doubtful. Further remarks on 'Consecrated Marriage' will be found on pp. 100–111 of *The Consecrated Life* (Nisbet & Co., 21 Berners Street, London, W., price 1s.).

frank an offer to submit gracefully, if it must be.

A frank and reasonable statement of our difficulty is of the greatest importance. Let it be kindly done; quietly too, without show of excitement; respectfully also, without a shadow of seeming to *insist* about it. We should explain that to yield would be doing violence to conviction of conscience, and incurring risk of damage to our spiritual life.

Moreover, we should be 'reasonable;' ready, that is, with a reason for objecting to what is proposed. This is why we have spoken, in a former chapter, so very strongly on the necessity of knowing, as far as possible, the evils which are really involved in doubtful forms of Recreation.[1] Even if our reason is not allowed at the moment to be of force, there is something left in the mind we have sought to influence which can be thought over and weighed, when perhaps we think that the subject has been forgotten. Besides, few things are so annoying, to those who think differently, as mere denunciation of any Recreation, without a clear reason being assigned for it.

Then, in stating our reason, we should most

[1] See page 74.

carefully avoid assuming an air of higher spirituality. Nothing so 'rubs people up the wrong way,' and defeats the object in view. Let it be understood clearly that we do not wish to judge, much less to condemn, others who think differently; that we leave each one absolute liberty *before God* to settle all such questions for themselves; but that *for ourselves* we decide that we should be acting against conscientious convictions as to how we can best serve God, if we were to yield.

But there is yet another feature of the spirit in which we should act to be described.

There should be a frank expression of willingness to submit, if it *must* be. This is most important, for two reasons. First, because it is, after all, a duty so to submit, as we have shown already, and it would be wrong to seek relief from our difficulty on any other ground than the right one. But secondly, because there are few arguments more powerful than absolute submission. Nothing so disarms unreasonable opposition, so paralyses the arbitrary exercise of authority, or renders the coercion of another so difficult, as an offer to surrender our will, if it is really demanded of us. At the same time, we should explain, as kindly as possible,

that, while we willingly submit, the responsibility before God of anything wrong which may be involved must rest with those who force us to act against our conviction.

Very few husbands or parents would resist the united force of such an appeal as this, especially if made by one who, as wife or child, showed in all the details of daily life the winning devotion and the loving self-sacrifice for which these positions in life offer such endless openings.

We think ourselves that very many of the difficulties which Christians find in settling such matters with those in any authority over them arise from neglect of one or more of the features we have described. But the necessity of exhibiting them becomes all the greater, if the one whom it is sought to influence makes no profession whatever of religion. These are not to be scolded and argued into caring for higher things, but are to be 'won' for Christ (in the case of husbands) 'by the conversation of the wives' (1 Pet. iii. 1), and in the case of other relationships in exactly the same way. The believer should, like Daniel, act so faithfully in all the various duties of life towards all around him, that 'none occasion nor fault' can be found with him by those who watch most

closely, 'except concerning the law of his God' (Dan. vi. 4, 5). Then he may hope and believe that his testimony for Christ will be a 'winning' one, when he is known to stand out, not against what he does not happen to like, as a mere matter of choice, but only against what he believes in his heart to be wrong.

But if, after all, it is fruitless, and the Christian has to submit to a higher human authority, it should be done *as a Christian*, that is, in a Christlike spirit. Then the case must be left wholly in the Lord's hands, and the objectionable Recreation must be entered upon, so long as no expressed law of God is violated, as *His* will for us. We should lay aside all that feeling of resentment which is so natural to being obliged to act against our will, and receive the trial from His hand and bear it for Him. Thus viewed, we shall bear it in a spirit to recommend the reality of our profession to others.

At the same time, it will be an occasion for special watchfulness. Many who have been forced into Recreations from which they would shrink have given way under them, and fallen into a frivolous and worldly spirit. This is from wrongly viewing the enforced Recreation. They have taken it up *as* a Recreation, instead of as

a cross to be carried for Christ's sake, which it really is.

It may be a scene of peculiar temptation into which one is forced. If so, it is most important to preserve throughout it all as close a communion with God as can be. And if the surrounding circumstances are not favourable to this, there is all the more need to sustain it by special effort.

But it will also be an occasion for most definite and unwavering trust that God who 'is able to keep us from falling' (Jude, ver. 24) will most surely do so. When we enter into the scene of temptation, led by His hand, in the path of duty, because seeking to keep His direct command of obedience to those whose authority has His sanction, we are not running into danger for our own pleasure. Danger entered into by choice is, indeed, a perilous and almost hopeless position; but where His hand leads, His hand will also uphold. Only we must keep the conscious touch of His hand all the while. This will enable us to seize any opportunity of bearing witness for Him, and to show by our whole manner and tone that we are not in the surroundings which are natural to us. And it is just possible that in this spirit,

and with our eyes open for any opportunity of speaking for God, we may be used, even upon the dangerous ground, to lead some mind to higher and holier thoughts.

But in this connection, let us earnestly warn our readers against the specious and (we doubt not) well-meant, but most dangerous mistake of choosing such scenes, when no absolute call of duty leads us, just with a view of 'doing good' there. We do not think that any *real* 'good' is done in scenes and places to which God does not very distinctly *lead* us. Many get far more harm than they do good, when they *choose* scenes of gaiety and frivolity, even with so apparently good an intention. Our first duty (even before we think of others) is to maintain our own spirituality before God, and no consideration of helping others must lead us where this is in any way endangered. 'Take heed unto thyself' (1 Tim. iv. 16) was advice needful for such an one as Timothy was; needful too is it for us all.

Then, as regards others. Scenes of gaiety and worldliness are not good hunting-grounds for souls. People met there are generally in a frivolous and worldly spirit, and not in that receptive condition in which we are likely to

win them for Christ. Moreover, however much a true Christian may feel it possible to speak about Christ *anywhere*, there is no doubt that worldly people shrink with their whole heart from such conversation, when all the surroundings are gay and frivolous. They resent any mention of Christ's name as 'quite out of place' under such circumstances, when they would listen quietly at other times. And we partly agree with them. The 'name which is above every name' (Phil. ii. 9) is sadly 'out of place' where all around is vanity and folly; only equally 'out of place' is 'every one that nameth the name of Christ' (2 Tim. ii. 19) when in scenes of Recreation where that holy name would be an unwelcome sound.

CHAPTER IX.

Restraining Young People's Amusements.

ANOTHER most important point connected with our subject is to consider if it is right to countenance doubtful Recreations for the sake of others, who might (it is supposed) be injured in one way or another by their denial. This is a very general statement of the question; but it admits of several lines of definite application to special circumstances.

Dividing the question into broad outlines, it takes one of two directions. Parents and those in charge of young people often argue that it is advisable to allow for them what is confessedly doubtful, lest they should, as soon as they can choose for themselves, 'run into the opposite extreme,' and throw themselves wholly into worldly amusements; or else, lest they should seek, under more dangerous conditions than in the home circle, what is denied them there.

Or again, many very earnest Christians are afraid of losing influence over others if they hold out against their doubtful amusements; and so they yield, hoping thereby to gain a useful influence over them.

We shall deal carefully with each of these points, as we know them to be questions which seriously exercise the minds of many who desire very earnestly to do what is right in the matter of Recreation.

We will first take the case of parents, including, of course, under this title, all who, in place of parents, are in charge of children. Are they to allow doubtful amusements in order to avoid possible future dangers? Before giving our reasons in detail, we answer a most deliberate *No.* We are strongly of opinion that those who have the bringing up of children should steadily set their faces against all that is really dangerous.

At the same time, we, of course, sympathize with the anxiety of parents on the subject, and understand how easy it is for them to be carried away with the plausible and specious arguments which are often urged on the other side. But it need hardly be said that we do not sympathize with those professing Christian parents who, under cover of such an excuse, secretly,

and sometimes openly, encourage their children in purely worldly and dangerous Recreations and scenes of amusement, in the hope of their 'marrying well,' or forming 'useful' connections by so doing.

We shall now give our reasons for the advice which we have offered.

In the first place, we will deal with the question from the idea of *expediency*, as some put it. They agree that what is proposed may not be exactly a right thing to encourage, and that they would rather not do so; but (they argue) that it seems 'expedient' to allow it, as greater dangers may thereby be avoided. So thinking, they altogether mistake St. Paul's teaching about expedient things, when he writes, 'All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient' (1 Cor. x. 23). Seeing that he makes a distinction between things 'lawful' and things 'expedient,' and says plainly that some things which 'are lawful' are 'not expedient,' they assume that the converse of this is true, and they draw the most unwarranted conclusion that some things may be 'expedient' which could not exactly be called 'lawful;' or, at all events, that an idea that they are 'expedient' makes them become 'lawful.'

St. Paul had no such thought as this. With him, the question as to whether anything was expedient or not was, so to speak, a lesser one inside the greater one, which must be settled first, as to whether it was 'lawful.' It was a sort of *second sifting* of things, all of which might be rightly considered lawful. Things in themselves lawful might be expedient or not according to varying circumstances; but things not clearly lawful in themselves could never be expedient at all. St. Paul's use of the expression 'expedient,' was rather to *draw in* the limit of what it is advisable for a Christian to do or to allow, even among lawful things. But some misuse the expression to *extend* that limit, and to include things to which they would hesitate considerably to apply the expression of 'lawful' at all, in any real sense of the word.

We should clearly understand that no ideas of expediency can possibly make a wrong thing to be right, however strong may seem the reasons for permitting it. If we *question* the danger of a thing, that is another matter, and must be settled on other grounds; but we are speaking now of what we ourselves consider to be doubtful or dangerous. We must never believe that the end justifies the means used to attain

it, if those means in any way partake of the nature of sin. When once we are fully persuaded in our own minds that a thing is wrong in itself, we must set our faces against it at all cost, and whatever the consequences may seem to be.

Having thus dealt with the question in a general way, merely stating a principle which would apply equally to everything else besides Recreations, we will take it up more directly, and try to meet difficulties which may present themselves to those who have to do with young people in the matter of their amusements.

It is very common to hear it urged that to allow some of the doubtful forms of Recreation is likely to save them later on from more severe temptations. We wholly dissent from this. It is only another way of saying that milder forms of *present* temptation are likely to save our young people from severer ones in the future. Or, to put it in another way, it means that the *present certainty* of a lighter form of temptation is better than to run the risk (which is not absolutely certain) of falling into greater ones afterwards.

To make it just for the moment a mere question of the possibilities either way, it is by

no means fair to assume, as so many do, that those who are denied dangerous Recreations when young will seek them with all the greater zeal, when they can follow their own desires. As a matter of fact, in countless instances it has turned out otherwise. Many a family has been brought up by really Christian parents who have absolutely forbidden all that they believed to be wrong; and the children have grown up to thank God for such parents, as well as for the very restraints against which at one time they were inclined to rebel. Experience has placed it beyond a doubt that the danger supposed to be in such restraint is by no means a *necessary* one.

At the same time it would not be fair to deny that such results *have* followed. But it will be generally found that this has been the case, not with all the members of the particular family, but with one and another; and that often there are various other circumstances to account for it, which may easily be overlooked. When the son or daughter of Christian parents, who have tried to bring up their children in separation from all dangerous Recreations, turns out to be fond of them, worldly people declare that it is the result of such strictness. Such people say

nothing of the countless multitude of their own sons and daughters whom they have trained for the world as a matter of course, and who have turned out 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God' (2 Tim. iii. 4). Nor do they confess with shame that they have themselves so effectively done Satan's work for him, by presenting to the children of Christian parents the very temptations under which they have fallen, and from which their parents in their earlier days sought to shield them. The world taunts and jeers at the growing up children of Christian parents for the restraints under which they are placed, tries to laugh them out of such ideas, sets before them as temptingly as possible the most dazzling temptations to worldly and dangerous pleasures, and, when it has so far succeeded in its Satanic work as to lead some of them astray, it actually points the finger at the 'religion' of the parents, and says that this is the cause of it. And many unthinking Christians are deluded by such barefaced misrepresentation, and fancy that there must be something in it after all.

We know, of course, that the children of godly parents often 'turn out badly;' but when it is so, thoughtless people say that it is

'proverbial,' and talk plenty of such nonsense about it. But it is well to trace every effect to its right cause. It may be (and often is) owing to inconsistencies and unreality, as regards other things than Recreations, exhibited by the parents, and detected by the children. Or it may be from terribly strong temptations being presented to them by worldly friends to act against their parents' teaching, in which case it is simply wicked for the worldly friends, after counteracting as much as possible the influence of religious parents over their children, to attribute any failure to the parents' strictness. Or, of course, it *may* be the result of reaction from the strict line to which Christian parents have compelled obedience, as long as it was in their power to do so.

But even when this is the case, it is no argument, except to a very shallow mind, against proper religious restraints being placed around the young. In reality, it only goes to prove that grace is not hereditary, and that all the earnest efforts of godly parents to bring about the real conversion to God of the child have hitherto failed. Moreover, it is no proof that the conversion will *never* occur; for there still

remains the possibility that the child who has 'turned out so badly' may even yet live to bring forth fruit from the seed sown in early years, and, after all, to thank God for the teaching of their parents.

Moreover, parents who allow confessedly doubtful amusements on the grounds which we are considering, not only make the fatal mistake of immediately plunging their children into *present* temptations, hoping thereby to avoid *future* ones of a still more dangerous sort; but they actually do their best to bring about the very end which they wish so much to avoid. All dangerous Recreations allowed, especially when in response to the urgent solicitations of unconverted children, must inevitably *foster a taste* for them. Habit becomes a second nature, and the craving for worldly pleasures becomes intensified by continued indulgence. And this is far more likely to lead them to seek such things anywhere and everywhere, later on, than would be the firm restraint which we advise. Parents who encourage dangerous taste in their children cannot control those tastes when the children become their own masters; and they must not complain if their children 'see no harm' in

developing to the full the tastes which they have been permitted to encourage.[1]

It is true that many children who have been practically unrestrained as to Recreation, have not, in after life, become altogether absorbed in worldly pleasures. But this must not be put down, as it so thoughtlessly is, to the mere fact that they were so unrestrained. It is, through the mercy of God, *in spite* of it, rather than *because* of it. There must be taken into consideration all the restraining influences of such religious teaching as they may have had, and the counter influence of Christian friends. There is, too, the pressure of care or business

[1] This is so terribly true of 'private theatricals,' which many consider so harmless. We regard their relation to theatres as that of the opening bud to the full-blown flower. They are but 'nurseries' for the public performances. They create and foster tastes which, in time, will not be otherwise satisfied; and our objection to them is accordingly as strong as to the theatre itself. Parents who provide them for their children, in hope of saving them from theatres, are doing a perilously foolish thing. They are actually *training them* for what they would have them avoid. Parents who try to persuade their children—whom they have trained by private theatricals to crave for the stage—that they ought not to attend the theatre, are trifling with their children's common sense, which it is always dangerous to do.

which often diverts the mind from tendencies towards gaiety, to say nothing of a certain natural penetration of mind, which (altogether apart from grace) leads some to see more easily than others do the emptiness and folly of all worldly pleasures. Again, there is that natural strength of character which often leads unconverted people to despise and withdraw from them. All these must be taken into account before we can safely say that children who have not been under parental restraint as to their Recreations, have, in consequence of this, grown up to care little for dangerous and hurtful amusements.

But, again, we feel it so important for Christian parents to refuse their children all questionable Recreation, in order that the *memories of home* in after life may have an influence on the right side. When the children of Christian parents grow up, even if from any cause they have turned aside to a worldly life, the well-remembered influence of their father and mother will not be thrown away. It will at times make itself felt in the conscience, and force them to feel that they are doing wrong. It will have a restraining power which may prevent the furthest excesses of sinful pleasures

being pursued. And who knows the day when such memories may not, under the Spirit's teaching, first enkindle, and then deepen and intensify, a 'godly sorrow,' which will work a 'repentance to salvation, not to be repented of' (2 Cor. vii. 10)?

No such results, however, are likely to follow on an early permitted indulgence in Recreations of a doubtful or sinful sort. When parents yield what they think to be wrong, and the children know that they do so, the influence in after life will, in most cases, be valueless. The children will never believe that the parents *really meant* that there was any decided harm after all. And at the best, the memories of home, which ought to be of a powerful and sanctifying character, even on wayward children, will be those of vacillating purpose and unmeaning profession.

We trust that what we have said will be helpful, not only to parents in dealing with children, but also to children, in helping them to understand clearly why their parents feel it right to refuse them some forms of Recreation.

CHAPTER X.

Gaining Influence for God.

WE shall continue our consideration as to whether it is right to countenance doubtful Recreations for the sake of others who might (it is supposed) be injured in one way or other by their denial.

Enough has been said about the case of parents and those in charge of young people; so we will now turn to the second of those 'broad outlines,' into which we said that the subject is naturally divided.[1] We shall consider the fact that many earnest Christians are afraid of losing influence over others, if they hold out against their doubtful amusements; and so they give way, hoping thereby to gain a useful influence over them. We shall more especially have in view the case of those who wish to influence for good their own brothers and

[1] See p. 91.

sisters, their relations, companions, and friends, and to act for the best in houses where they stay on a visit.

It will be readily understood that we have the very deepest sympathy with any desire to gain over others an influence which may be used for God; and we should, of course, be prepared to advise any one to go to the very utmost limit of what is innocent and right in order to gain it. But at this limit we should most certainly draw the line.

Before, however, going further into the subject, we will carefully inquire what many people mean by 'influence,' and as carefully explain what we mean by it ourselves. This will considerably help us to a right practical conclusion.

By 'influence,' many professing Christians mean very little more than being well thought of by others, and considered by them agreeable and desirable companions. However much there may be in theory about using their influence for God, it never really comes to this. If they were honest with themselves, they would quickly see that their chief aim is to be 'popular,' and to enjoy for themselves such pleasures as popularity with worldly people

will bring with it, in the way of society and amusements. They deceive themselves with the idea that mere personal popularity is real religious influence; and for this popularity they will sacrifice almost any principle. Of these it may truly be said, that 'they have their reward' (Matt. vi. 2), that is, they get what they aim at. Many (but by no means all) worldly people will very highly appreciate them, and even go so far as to pay them the doubtful compliment of pointing to them as their ideal of what religious people should be. It is but a poor reward. Such Christians *aim at nothing*, and with no difficulty hit their mark.

Some go a little beyond such purely selfish considerations, and persuade themselves that they really further the interests of religion. But it is no more than this: they imagine that, if they make themselves popular with worldly people, they will, in some indefinite way, make religion popular with them at the same time. They do not, of course, try in any *real* sense to influence them religiously, or they would soon find out their false position. But they rest content with the idea that, by becoming popular with them, they in some manner

prepare the way for the entrance of religion into their hearts.

Others go a little farther than this. Their consciences are not quite easy about the absence of real religious influence, seeing that to obtain this is their professed reason for freely mixing in worldly amusements. So they satisfy the demands of conscience by the vaguest religious conversation. Discussing a sermon, or a religious book, or some doctrinal belief, or some interesting Church question, is the sum total of it all. If they can squeeze in a little of this sort of vague, indefinite, and aimless conversation, in some out-of-the-way corner, between the dances at a ball, or between the acts at a theatre, they will talk much afterwards about the openings which even such places give for what they call 'religious conversation.' The partner of a '*religious*' *dancer*, or the companion of a '*religious*' *theatre-goer*, rather expects it than otherwise. Worldly friends have no objection to it. It is not *vital religion*. It does not raise the question of personal salvation, or arouse the slumbering conscience, but it just satisfies the professing Christian. It enables him, with a quieted and lulled conscience, to indulge himself in the

most worldly and frivolous amusements; and real *soul-work* for Christ is quietly left alone.

But by 'influence' we mean something very much more than this. We mean *spiritual power* with others; that others should look upon us as those who really seek to win their souls for Christ, and to whom they will gladly turn when real trouble and sorrow come upon them. To gain such an influence, we must be known by them to be spiritual persons. They must notice in us that, while we try to be good-natured and kind to them as far as it is possible, we will not come down from our own spiritual level; and that we own an allegiance to Christ which we place before everything else, and to which we cling at all cost. They must see us to be really consistent with the profession which we make.

It is such a grievous mistake to suppose that worldly people *really respect* those Christians who profess one thing and practise another. They like them, it is true; they enjoy their company; and they speak well of them. They don't mind the aimless 'religious' talk occasionally. But if ever it comes to real *soul-seeking* conversation (which, alas! is very seldom in the case of such Christians), worldly people

can see no difference between themselves and these Christian friends. They think that all must be as right with themselves as with those who seem just as thoroughly to enjoy the most worldly amusements, and they naturally smile at it.

On the other hand, real spiritual influence with others will carry with it an authority to speak about sin and salvation which they will recognise and allow. However much they may at the time object to being so dealt with, they will feel that, at all events, we are *the right ones to do it.* But if we have danced with them the night before, or gone in company with them to the play-house, or joined heartily in their frivolous gaiety, they will feel it quite out of place; and, what is more, so much shall we feel this also ourselves, that we shall shrink from it just as much as they do. Nothing so much unnerves the Christian for spiritual work as a secret consciousness of spiritual unfitness.

No; if we want real spiritual power with others which will draw them to us when dark hours come, we must keep up, and let them see that we do so, our own spiritual level. The lessee of a large London theatre, who was

urging the example of clergymen who attended his plays, once admitted to a friend of ours that, were he on his death-bed, he would prefer to send for a clergyman who did not. This is exactly what we mean; and it is as true of every form of doubtful and purely worldly amusement as it is of theatre-going. At the approach of sorrow and death, the *really awakened* worldling will seek for solid comfort from godly, spiritual friends, and not from his companions in the dance or the theatre.

We will now clearly explain another mistake which underlies the well-meaning attempts of some professing Christians to seek influence over others by mixing freely in their worldly amusements. They try to make religion attractive to worldly people by watering it down to their level.

The religion of Jesus Christ, as explained in the New Testament, is something very solemn and very real. It commences with a changed heart and renewed affections. It brings one into close and real personal union with Christ, and results in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God in the heart. It calls to a life of self-denial, and of separation from all that involves or countenances sin. It claims to enter into

and to influence every thought of the heart, every word of the lip, and every outward action of the life. There is the cross to bear; and there is reproach to suffer, not only from those who make no profession of religion, but from those, too, who have only the 'name that they live,' but are still spiritually 'dead' (Rev. iii. 1). It cuts at the root of all amusements into which the Spirit of Christ could not lead the way, and which, either in their essential nature or in their surrounding circumstances, are dangerous to one's own soul or that of others.

Such a religion it is impossible to make popular to unrenewed hearts, or to bring about by any worldly methods. It needs a change of heart to understand it at all. And it is a most fearful mistake to try and win people to a form of religion which is consistent with anything which is *not* consistent with real religion. It is work for Satan and not for God, when we win people to a popular form of religion without that real change of heart which produces a real renewal of the affections and tastes, and which is the only religion recognised in the New Testament as that which saves the soul. Any so-called religion, however regular and devout in its outward

observances, which admits of amusements which are not Christlike, is a vain thing. And this should at once be our thought when people urge that clergymen and others who make a profession of religion are regular supporters of worldly amusements. Such a fact does not really call in question the nature of the amusements, but that of the religion which admits of their enjoyment.

For this reason, it is so necessary to give clear testimony in the matter of amusements. What we really do is *to testify to the reality of true religion.* There is a great deal of what goes for religion in these days which is made attractive to unrenewed hearts by music, by outward ceremony, and shortened or omitted sermons, and which is no doubt perfectly consistent (as its followers insist that it is) with any amount of worldliness and gaiety, for the simple reason that, in the real sense of the word, it is *no religion at all.* And the true Christian should, in matters of Recreation, as in anything else, endeavour to expose that soul-destroying fraud of a religion which exists apart from real conversion of heart and life to God.

But, it may be urged, ought we not to show that the true Christian has sources of real

pleasure, and can be as happy as other people? Ought we not to show (and especially to the young) that people can come to Christ, and yet not lose all enjoyment of life? These questions require careful handling—for some well-meaning Christians answer them hastily, and think it right to hold back at nothing, with a view to showing that to be a Christian does not mean being gloomy or miserable. Certainly there are plenty of innocent and healthful Recreations and amusements which as Christians we can enjoy, and we should do so heartily as unto the Lord.

But it is not in these that the *special* happiness of a Christian consists. The believer should make it clear that he has sources of happiness of which the worldling knows nothing. Indeed, he *alone* has a right to be truly happy. No one not *consciously* reconciled to God could be happy for one single moment while thinking about it in the light of eternity. But the true Christian can afford to be happy, and to enjoy life in all that is innocent and right. The highest pleasures, however, of the believer are those which he finds 'at God's right hand' (Ps. xvi. 11). His renewed heart and altered tastes enable him to see and enjoy them; and

all about him should notice that he does so. He should be always bright, and thus show that there is something real to be found in true religion.

We are not, however, writing now of the Christian's *special* sources of pleasure, but of his Recreations, and in connection with these he must bear his witness to the reality of true religion. But it is the greatest mistake to let people suppose that there is no such real and spiritual difference between true Christians and other people in the matter of Recreation. Nor is anything gained, but much is lost, by upholding for a moment the idea that people can come to Christ, in any saving sense, and yet remain as devoted to the world as they were before.

In the light of these remarks, we think it will now be very clear that no real influence for Christ is gained by yielding to doubtful and dangerous forms of Recreation. While we gladly join in all that is healthful and innocent, we must draw a definite line there, and make it plain that *real* religion is a power which bears its fruit in renewed tastes, and can take no part in what is not clearly of a Christlike nature. We must, lovingly and kindly, but yet very firmly, take our stand for Christ, and witness

against the 'world, and the things which are in the world.' So shall we bear testimony to the reality of religion, and be ever ready, as opportunity offers, to influence others for God.

It will cost us something, no doubt,—many a hard word, and many a cold look; but the reward will surely come in time, because we stand on the side which is *bound to win.* We shall see others brought by our means, not merely to 'religion,' but to CHRIST, and to salvation in Him. And even if never in this life, at all events before His judgment throne, those whom we sought (although in vain) to win for Christ, will own that we were right; and the Master's 'Well done,' will bury in eternal oblivion all the hard words and the cold looks which we have borne for Him.

CHAPTER XI.

Recreations open to the Christian.

WE shall now mention some Recreations in which we believe the Christian can safely take part. We desire to make it clear that we only object to those Recreations which are dangerous *in their nature;* and that, putting these aside, there is plenty left to afford the most thorough and enjoyable relaxation of mind or body.

We are the more anxious to do this, because we would remove an objection which is often raised against religion itself, when it protests against dangerous Recreations. If you speak against dancing, theatricals (both public and 'private'),[1] card-playing, and one or two other sources of moral and spiritual danger, people at once begin, 'Oh! if you are going to take away all our Recreation,' etc., or else they

[1] On all of these, see further on pp. 120–125.

pleadingly declare that 'young people really *must have* Recreation, and what are you to do if religion takes it all away?'

It is very sad to hear people talk as if all their ideas of Recreation centred round these dangerous things. And it is one further argument of great weight against such things, that those who indulge in them at all freely get wound up to such an unreal and excited condition of mind, that they can think of little besides as real Recreation. Everything else appears so tame, and nothing seems so to satisfy the cravings of a false and vitiated appetite, as these exciting pastimes, that these, and nothing else, are Recreations.

On the other hand, we shall show that there are Recreations to suit every class of life, and every degree of intellectual or social distinction, which are quite consistent with a sincere profession of Christ.

Recreation, roughly speaking, may be classed under two general heads—out-door and in-door; although these may, in some cases, run the one into the other. We shall, however, for convenience, follow these general outlines, taking the former of them first.

Of out-door Recreations there are really very

few to which there is any serious objection. Out of doors, in the open air, is just the place for all in-door workers to find their relaxation. They should choose it in preference to any other, so as best to preserve their health and vigour of mind and body. The air itself does them good, conveying, by means of the circulation of blood, heat and life and renewal over the whole frame. To drive or to sit merely in the open air, has a beneficial effect, so long as a proper precaution is taken against catching a chill when it is cold; and to those incapable of bodily exertion this becomes a necessity. But bodily exercise taken in the open air is the most advantageous form of all possible Recreation.

Walking longer or shorter distances, according to one's strength, or to the time at one's disposal, is within every one's reach. Then the Recreative power, as well as the pleasure of a walk, may be increased by pleasant conversation, whether about Divine things in the strictest sense, or about general matters, which, to a consecrated mind, have all their bearing on, and connection with, the works and will of God. Or in the country, and, indeed, in the neighbourhood of most towns, the interest and pleasure of a walk may be immensely increased

by the student of natural history, who is always searching for something (either plant, flower, butterfly, insect, etc.), and who has an eye to see on all sides countless objects of interest which are not observed by others. Indeed, if there were no other sources of out-door Recreation opened to any one but those which can be made to gather round a walk, there would be plenty to afford all the relaxation which many require.

But we will turn now to other sorts of out-door Recreation.

We do not think it possible for the Christian to object to any one of the usually recognised out-door games which boys and young men are accustomed to play. And we would recommend them, not only to these, but, so far as is suitable to their condition, to girls and young ladies also. If the latter were more accustomed to take part, so far as possible, in good healthy out-door games, we should hear of fewer 'delicate' daughters, and chronic invalids among middle-aged ladies. 'Weak spines' would be very rare; and that hysterical condition, now so common, would be unknown.

Moreover, we do not hesitate to recommend the Christian to seek proficiency in such matters,

not only for his own sake, by way of recreation and health, but also for the Lord's sake. Untold influence, which can be used for God, may be gained in this way over numbers, especially of young people, who would never be reached by those who shrink from all such bodily exercise, or who appear to despise it. Only, of course, we should see that influence thus gained *really is* used for the Lord in the way spoken of in our chapter on that subject. (See chap. x.)

We hardly think it necessary to specify particular out-door games, when all are good. But when we mention cricket, croquet, football (and all games of ball), riding, skating, rowing, jumping, and all athletic exercises, we think that we have given a good list from which to select. Hunting involves much that is cruel, in spite of all that its patrons assert, and we should advise the Christian to have nothing to do with it.

Lawn tennis we most strongly recommend to all who have it within their reach. For those who have little time for Recreation it is specially valuable, calling into exercise almost every muscle of the body. It affords an agreeable opportunity for meet-

ing friends, and lies open to no sensible objections.

The only possible objection to all such out-door games is when the company into which they may lead is bad. This is an important question; and when there is danger on this score, the Christian must not expose himself to it with the idea of getting or doing good. But, of course, we presume that those who have followed us thus far in our subject will apply to every form of Recreation the tests which we have laid down in former chapters.

We must now turn to the in-door Recreations which lie open to the Christian.

A vast and varied field there is from which to choose. Indeed, of all the usually recognised in-door Recreations, we say, without hesitation, that there are but very few against which any sensible Christian could urge objection. It would, perhaps, be the better plan first to speak briefly of one or two which are of a doubtful sort.

Dancing has been more than once alluded to in these pages as a most dangerous pastime; and we think very decidedly that no spiritually-minded person can have anything to do with it, either at home or in the ball-room. Besides

all the gaiety, frivolity, dress, expense, late hours, and many other sources of danger, there is the fact (to which the worldly, and, alas! professing Christians also, are so accustomed that they think nothing of it) that it places the lady in the arms of her partner in a way that is certainly not delicate or 'nice,' and which would not be tolerated under any other circumstances for a moment. How any right-minded, modest girl can allow it, or how any husband, parent, or brother can suffer it for his wife, daughter, or sister, is more than we can understand. But the indelicacy of it is an accepted thing by the world, and the Christian too often makes no stand against it.

Theatres we have also mentioned in passing as a source of terrible danger. They are so, not only to the spiritual interests of the Christian himself, but also on account of the fearful amount of vice which receives sanction by attendance at them. Multitudes who think that there is 'no harm' in theatres would be utterly shocked to read in these pages all that we could tell them about these places of amusement. Our own investigation has led us to conclude that there does not exist a more corrupting influence upon society than the stage and all that sur-

rounds it. It compasses the deepest moral ruin of countless young people, and old ones too. It is simply a *sink of corruption and vice*, wholly beyond recovery; and we are quite sure that no one with the least regard for the moral condition, especially of young girls, would ever encourage the stage if they knew all that was 'behind the scenes.' Theatres obtain support from many simply because much that is sadly true about them cannot possibly be written in language fit to read, and therefore the public know nothing about it. Many well-meaning people talk of purifying the stage; but this can never be done, so long as human nature is what it is, till the appearance 'on the boards' of women and girls is prohibited. Female actors were never heard of even in the pagan representations of the Greeks and Romans. They were unknown in the days of Shakespeare; and not until the licentious times of Charles the Second was anything so utterly opposed to womanly modesty, and so destructive of female virtue, introduced to the public. So great is their danger, and so fearfully strong their temptations to live a loose and shameless life, that vast numbers of them fall into it, sooner or later, almost as a matter of course.

Of *private theatricals* we have already spoken strongly (see pp. 73 and 100), and we need not again refer to them here.

Then, as to *card-playing*, we should be disposed to rank it amongst the doubtful things. Many have asked us to speak of it. It seems that a considerable diversity of opinion exists as to cards, from those Christians who 'see no harm in them,' to those who speak of them as 'the devil's playthings.' Of course, we are writing about card-playing with no money stake. Gambling over cards, or over anything else besides, however slight the stake, must never be thought of for a moment. Every Christian must take a decided stand about that.

But speaking of cards *considered in themselves*, we freely admit (as we wish to write in all candour, and fairly to face the questions we touch) that many plausible things can be said in their favour. *In themselves*, there seems to be no difference between them and the many historical, geographical, and other quartette games, which are played with various sorts of cards, and to which no reasonable objection can be urged. The mere element of what is called 'chance' in a game is not of itself an objection. As a game of skill, too, cards may fairly be com-

pared with very many most unobjectionable games. And there is no doubt that they can, and in thousands of cases have been played with in the most innocent way.

We recognise also the difficulty of many earnest Christians who feel that they ought to yield in this matter to the wishes of elderly parents and friends, who cannot read or work, but who can find recreation of an evening in a quiet game of cards.

But, on the other hand, it must be admitted with equal fairness, that cards have been an *immense power for evil*, and have compassed the ruin of thousands. This terrible result, we admit, has been no necessary outcome of anything peculiar and special to cards. Still the fact remains, that, for reasons difficult to explain, this particular game has been so woefully abused, to the ruin of so many, that it is certainly safer to have nothing to do with it. We earnestly advise parents, and all who are entitled to any special respect and obedience from the young, never to encourage them to play cards, and, above all, never to press them to do so when they have scruples on the subject. We strongly counsel all young Christians to set their faces firmly against cards, and frankly to

state as their objection to them the substance of the above remarks. Never willingly should they play, or when they can possibly refuse to do so; and by this we mean that nothing but the decided wish of those who have a most undoubted right to their obedience should ever lead them to countenance cards. In this latter case, we must commend to their notice the remarks on this particular aspect of Recreation in chapter viii.

In reference to *bagatelle*, *billiards*, and *dominoes*, we have no objection to them, when played in private houses, with personal friends, subject, of course, to the tests already urged as to all kinds of Recreation, regarding the time spent on them, the company they may lead to, etc. But the moment they are found to lead one into public rooms for play, and into drinking and smoking surroundings, they cease to be harmless.

Chess and *draughts* are most harmless games, and all young people should be taught to play. They educate the mind, and develop its power. But in this lies the only possible objection. To play well requires careful thought, and often when the mind is exhausted by the daily work, something which requires less concentration of mind

is to be preferred, or the idea of real Recreation is gone.

A game lately introduced, called 'Word making and word taking' (of which a box can be had almost anywhere for 1s. or 1s. 6d.), is a most useful and interesting one, combining exercise in spelling with ingenuity in altering words by the addition of one or more letters. Grown-up people enjoy it equally with the young; and in many families it is now deservedly a great favourite.

But of all in-door Recreations we are inclined to give the first place to *music*. There is something so soothing about it, so refining, and so engrossing. Those who are really musical enjoy it more than others, no doubt; but to those who cannot play themselves it is a source of pleasure to listen to it. All children should, from the first, be taught music, and be *encouraged* to persevere and excel.[1] Even where 'talent' is not marked, careful instruction should be given. It places at their disposal a never-failing source of Recreation for themselves, as well as a means

[1] We find ourselves that a small money reward when each new piece is mastered, goes a long way to encourage children to regular practice and to steady effort. Parents might take this hint.

of providing it for others also. Money so spent by parents on their children is well invested. And children should endeavour to improve themselves, and make the most of advantages given them; not only for their own sakes, but to repay, as far as possible, the outlay of their parents.

In family life, music is a most agreeable method of spending the evening. It unites families; it interests the brothers, and keeps them at home; it takes the place of many amusements which might be objectionable.[1]

Reading is also an almost endless source of Recreation, either to oneself alone, or when the reading is aloud to the whole family circle.

Natural history we have mentioned already as a source of out-door Recreation, but in-

[1] We have so lately written upon this subject in *My Lord's Money; or, The Consecration of Talents,* dealing very fully with it in all the aspects of it in which a Christian would desire words of counsel, that we must not repeat it all here. We would refer our readers to that little volume, if they wish for more from us on the subject. It can be ordered of any bookseller, price 1s. It is published by Messrs. Nisbet & Co., 21 Berners Street, London, W., who will send it, post free, for 12 stamps.

doors also it affords an unfailing variety of most interesting and amusing occupation.

We feel that we have but touched the outside edge of the subject of in-door Recreation. So much yet remains. But we have preferred to write rather with a view of touching matters upon which many young Christians might like a few words of counsel, than to attempt to deal with everything which might be suggested. Needlework (plain and fancy), knitting, netting, drawing, painting, illuminating, carpentering, scientific pursuits, and many more things besides, could be mentioned; till all ground is removed for the silly objection that, take away dancing, theatricals, cards, and a few other dangerous things, there is no Recreation left for the young.

MORRISON AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

Scripture Reading Union.

A UNION is being formed all over the world, of persons of all denominations, all ages, and all conditions in life, who are willing to read daily the same portions of God's Word, and to remember each other in prayer.

The plan of reading is very simple. The Old and New Testaments are being read through without any omission, at the same time. Every 'Member' reads daily the same chapter in the Old Testament, taking chapter by chapter, right through, and also a short Evening Portion, of about 15 to 20 verses, out of the New Testament. 'Associates' read only the New Testament. This is convenient for the young, and for those who belong to other Unions.

The Monthly Organs of the Union (*Christian Progress* and *Living Waters*,* price 1d. each) is a further bond of union between the 'Members.' It contains articles of help and encouragement in Christian life, testimony, and work, as well as a monthly statement of the portions to be read, Special Notes upon the Daily Readings, Requests for Prayer, and all necessary information respecting the Union.

This Union will be found a hallowed bond between the scattered members of families, and amongst associated Christian workers.

The writer of this volume invites his readers to unite thus in Scripture Reading and Prayer, and to send their names and full addresses (*clearly* written), stating whether Rev., Mr., Esq., Mrs., or Miss, and enclosing one stamp. A Card of Membership and all information, also papers about the Union, for sending to friends, will be sent at once. Address —The Secretary, 21 Exeter Hall, London, W.C.

Special Associations for New Testament reading are arranged for *Mothers' Meetings*, *Bible Classes*, *Sunday Schools*, *Country Villages*, *Town Districts*, *Parishes*, *or Congregations*, and *Young Ladies' Schools*. These are most interesting spheres of work. Those interested in them can apply for special instructions as above.

* *See last page of Advertisements.*

By the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,
AUTHOR OF 'CONSECRATED RECREATION,' ETC.

Price 1s.; sent post free for 12 stamps.

Twentieth Thousand.

THE SURE FOUNDATION;

OR,

Thoughts on the Believer's Safety.

This Volume is intended for the help and encouragement of the Anxious and Doubting, and for the establishment of the Believer in simple Gospel Truth.

CONTENTS:—1. 'Complete in Christ.' 2. 'The Righteousness of God.' 3. 'Boldness' and 'Boldly.' 4. Discouragement. 5. Now. 6. 'The Peace of Christ.' 7. The Assurance of Salvation. 8. Doubts and their Remedy. 9. Standing and Walking. 10. Faith or Feeling. 11. 'Ye in Me, and I in You.' 12. Reality. 13. Circumstances. 14. Forgiveness of Sin. 15. Justified by Faith.

'Even the advanced saint may find much here to ponder; but for weak and halting believers, it is indeed a most valuable little work, which will, we doubt not, be used of God in the upbuilding of many.'—*Word and Work.*

'Clearly and forcibly this little volume puts before us the "foundation truths" of the Gospel, and exposes inconsistencies and false forms of belief. It is admirably adapted to guide a troubled, self-scrutinizing soul to the rest found in believing Christ's Word.'—*Christian.*

May be ordered of all Booksellers.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W.

By the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

COMPANION VOLUME TO 'THE SURE FOUNDATION.'

Price 1s.; sent post free for 12 stamps.

Seventh Thousand.

THE CONSECRATED LIFE;

OR,

Thoughts on Practical Religion.

This volume is intended as a companion to 'THE SURE FOUNDATION,' dealing with practical daily life.

CONTENTS:—1. Consecration consequent on Conversion. 2. The Nature of Consecration. 3. The Extent of Consecration. 4. Consecration of the Daily Life. 5. Consecration in Family Life. 6. Consecration as applied to Parents. 7. Consecration as applied to Children. 8. Consecration in Business Life. 9. Consecration of the Thoughts. 10. Consecration in Personal Habits. 11. Consecrated Marriage. 12. Consecration and Health.

'A series of brief practical addresses on religion in daily life. Full of pithy and valuable suggestions, these addresses may well claim the attention of Christian readers.'—*Rock.*

'Mr. Boys has shown himself an acceptable writer of spiritual literature, and this little book will win for him new friends. It is admirable alike in matter and style, and touches the core of many vital subjects.'—*Christian.*

May be ordered of all Booksellers.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W.

By the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'CONSECRATED RECREATION,' ETC.

Price 1s. ; post free for 12 stamps.

Thirteenth Thousand.

REST UNTO YOUR SOULS;

OR,

The Enjoyment of Peace.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS ON MATT. xi. 28–30.

CONTENTS:—1. The Rest Itself. 2. Christ, the Source of Rest. 3. The Human Side of the Question. 4. Faith, the Secret of Rest. 5. Faith in Exercise. 6. Rest from Condemnation. 7. Rest from Temptation. 8. Rest in Anxiety. 9. Rest in Trials.

'Another of those thoroughly practical little books by this author, which we believe must prove a means of blessing to many. Mr. Boys seems to place his finger on just the points, small apparently in themselves, which, neglected or misunderstood, become real difficulties in the enjoyment of that rest which our Saviour waits to bestow.' —*Word and Work.*

'A wise and scriptural manual, directing the reader to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only source of true rest and peace. It may suitably be placed in the hands of those who have just begun the heavenly race.'—*Christian.*

'Much that is valuable may be found on all these important topics, as well as many comforting words concerning the sympathy of the Lord Jesus, our merciful and faithful High Priest.'—*Record.*

May be ordered of all Booksellers.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W.

By the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF 'CONSECRATED RECREATION,' ETC.

Price 1s.; sent post free for 12 stamps.

Fifth Thousand.

FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT;

OR,

Scriptural Studies about the Holy Ghost.

This Volume is a complete guide to the Teaching of the New Testament on the subject of the Spirit's indwelling in the Believer; and of the Believer's consequent responsibilities and privileges.

The subject is a most important one, and should be carefully studied by all believers who desire to know the reality of their dealings with the Spirit.

EVERY TEXT which bears on the subject in the New Testament is pointed out and explained.

CONTENTS:—Chap. 1. Importance of the Subject. 2. Offices of the Spirit distinguished (*Striving, Convincing, Converting, Indwelling*). 3. The Spirit's Work in Believers. 4. Negative Testimony to the Indwelling of the Spirit. 5. Teaching of the Gospels and Acts. 6. Teaching of the Epistle to the Romans. 7. Teaching of the Epistles to the Corinthians. 8. Teaching of the Epistle to the Galatians. 9. Teaching of the Epistle to the Ephesians. 10. Teaching of the remaining Epistles. 11. Practical Attitudes towards the Spirit (*Resistance, Blasphemy, Doing Despite, Lying to and Tempting*). 12. The Believer's Practical Dealings with the Spirit (*Grieving, Quenching, Praying, Walking, Sowing*). 13. Christ, and the Believer in connection with the Spirit (*Anointed, Filled, Led, Empowered*). 14. Concluding Remarks.

May be ordered of all Booksellers.

LONDON:

JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W

By the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,
AUTHOR OF 'CONSECRATED RECREATION,' ETC.

Price 1s.; sent post free for 12 stamps,

MY LORD'S MONEY.

OR,

The Consecration of Talents.

A SEQUEL TO 'THE CONSECRATED LIFE.'

CONTENTS:—1. My Talents, His Money. 2. The Definite Consecration of Talents. 3. Life as a Talent. 4. Influence as a Talent. 5. Social Position. 6. Educational Advantages. 7. Musical Gifts. 8. The Consecrated Pen. 9. Money as a Talent. 10. Time as a Talent.

This little volume is intended as a *very practical* help in Christian life, suggesting methods of employing Talents to the best advantage. Those who wish for such help will find it here.

The Author has endeavoured to deal with the various subjects so as to clear up the *difficulties* which are generally felt by those who wish to use all their indowments to the glory of God. These are very fully entered into and explained.

May be ordered of all Booksellers.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W.

Compiled by the Rev. ERNEST BOYS, M.A.,

Author of 'The Sure Foundation,' 'The Consecrated Life,
and 'Rest unto your Souls.'

The Cheapest and Prettiest Birthday Book.

THE BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCER;

OR, DAILY TEXT BOOK.

This Volume is intended to be used as a Daily Text Book all the year round.

The selection both of Texts and Verses of Poetry has been very carefully made with a view to real help in daily life, as well as a Register of our Friends' Birthdays, for the purpose of recollection and prayer, and a collection of their Autographs.

The life of simple, but very definite trust, and of entire consecration to God, as well as of devoted work for Him, as the only true standard of Christian life, has been kept steadily in view. Help and encouragement in Christian life, testimony, and work has been the main object of the Compiler.

From the hymns of the late Frances Ridley Havergal, and of Miss Hankey, the largest number have been selected. Many, too, have been taken from those of Jean Sophia Pigott and Anna Waring. Charlotte Elliot, Anna Shipton, A. M. James, and others, also supply a few.

The Book is very handsomely printed in black and red, and very prettily bound. It would make an acceptable and helpful present to friends.

PUBLISHED BY BEMROSE & SONS,

23 OLD BAILEY, LONDON.

Price* 1*s.* 6*d.* *in cloth.* *May be had of all Booksellers.

Magazines Edited by the Rev. E. Boys.

MONTHLY, PRICE ONE PENNY EACH.

They may be ordered from all Booksellers.

CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

A Magazine of Help and Encouragement in Christian Life, Testimony, and Work.

The aim of this Magazine is to encourage believers in their daily walk amidst the realities of life.

BEMROSE & SONS, 23 OLD BAILEY, LONDON.

LIVING WATERS.

An Illustrated Magazine of Gospel Truth for Old and Young.

The main object of this Magazine is to proclaim the simple Gospel of the Grace of God in plain language and clear type.

Space will be devoted to each of the following:—THE BIBLE; TEMPERANCE; HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT; CHILDREN.

This Magazine is specially suitable for distribution as a Tract.

S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO., 9 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

THE CHURCHMAN'S PENNY MAGAZINE.

An Illustrated Magazine for the Family and Parish.

This Magazine is intended not only for general reading, but for *Localizing in Parishes.* It contains contributions by decided Evangelical writers, and is designed to be a help to Clergymen in parochial work. Specimens, with Hints on Localization, can be obtained from the Editor, Beverley, Sidcup, Kent.

S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO., 9 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

BV 1046777
4598 Boys
-B8 Consecrated Recreation

BINDERY
Rly Collier

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY



11 570 431

BV 4598
.B8

1046777

570 431

